

# **Minor White, the eye that shapes**

**Peter C. Bunnell, with Maria B. Pellerano and  
Joseph B. Rauch**

Author

Bunnell, Peter C

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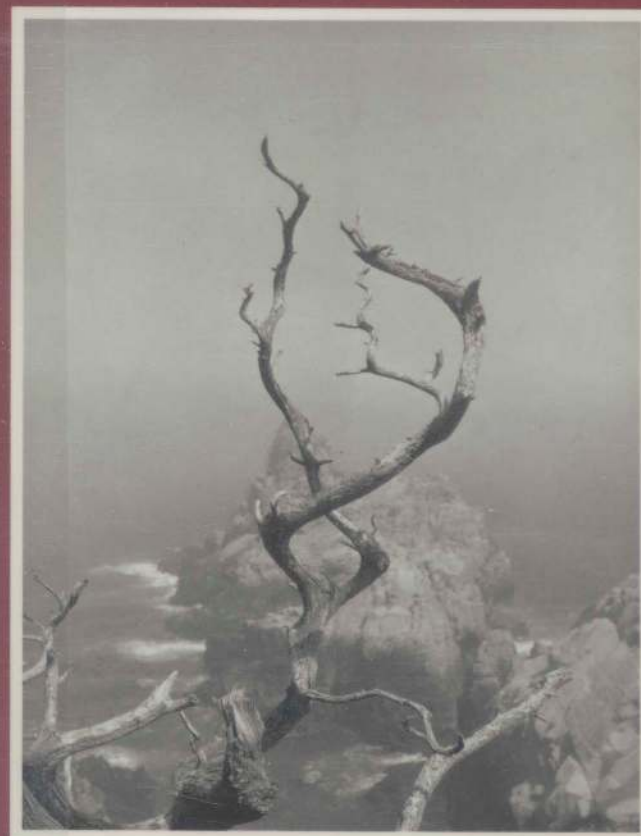
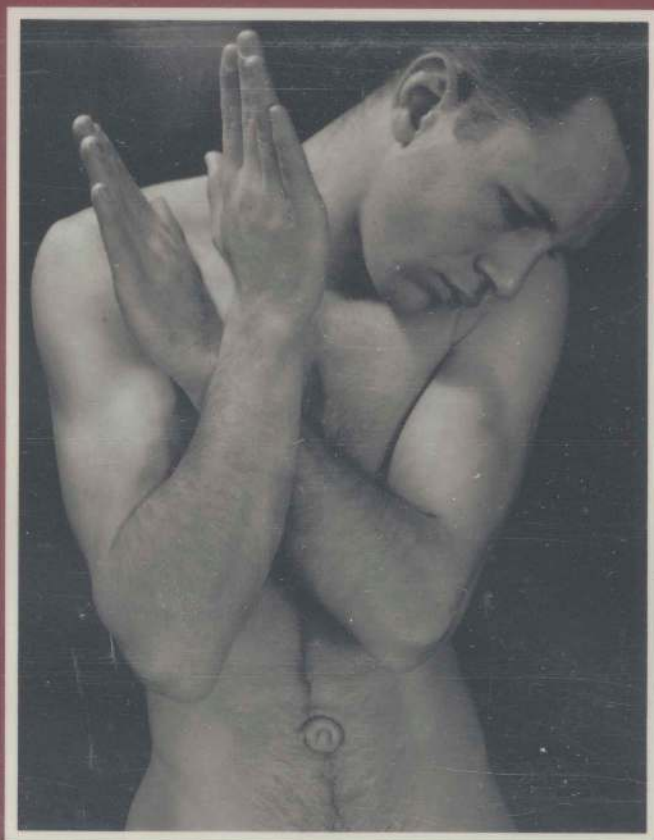
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The Museum of Modern Art's exhibition history—  
from our founding in 1929 to the present—is  
available online. It includes exhibition catalogues,  
primary documents, installation views, and an  
index of participating artists.

# MINOR WHITE

THE EYE THAT SHAPES





\$60.00

# MINOR WHITE

THE EYE THAT SHAPES

Peter C. Bunnell

Minor White (1908–1976) is recognized as one of the most important photographic artists active during the thirty years after World War II. Living during this period in San Francisco, then in Rochester, and finally near Boston, he produced a singular body of imagery that assures his place in the history of twentieth-century photography. His was a pictorial achievement that helped shape a distinctly modern American photographic style that is characterized by luminous clarity, lyricism, and grace. His approach may be seen to be analogous to that of Edward Weston and Ansel Adams, two of his early mentors, but it was the work of Alfred Stieglitz that most influenced White's attitudes regarding the expressive and creative methods in photography. His themes have a rich autobiographical content and relate to issues of identity and spirituality. His subject matter ranges from portraiture, studies of the nude, the landscape, to architecture. He began with a deep interest in the reality of the depictive photographic image, and his work evolved over several years into one of biomorphic abstraction and elaborate symbolic representation.

White was born in Minneapolis and studied science and poetry at the University of Minnesota. He began his photographic career in 1937 in Portland, Oregon, photographing architecture and gaining technical expertise in theater and landscape photography before being drafted into the army during World War II. After leaving the army in 1945, White went to New York City to learn museum curatorial procedures at the Museum of Modern Art and to study art history with Meyer Schapiro at Columbia University.

In 1946 he joined Ansel Adams on the faculty of the California School of Fine Arts in San Francisco. In 1952 White was part of a group that founded the progressive photographic journal *Aperture*, and he remained editor for the next twenty-three years. In 1953 he moved to Rochester, New York, to work with Beaumont Newhall at George Eastman House, leaving in 1956 to devote himself to his own creative work and to teaching at the Rochester Institute of Technology. In 1965 White joined the faculty of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, where he created an innovative program in photographic education.

*Minor White: The Eye That Shapes* is published to accompany a major retrospective exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, which will travel throughout the country until

*(Continued on back flap)*











# MINOR WHITE

THE EYE THAT SHAPES



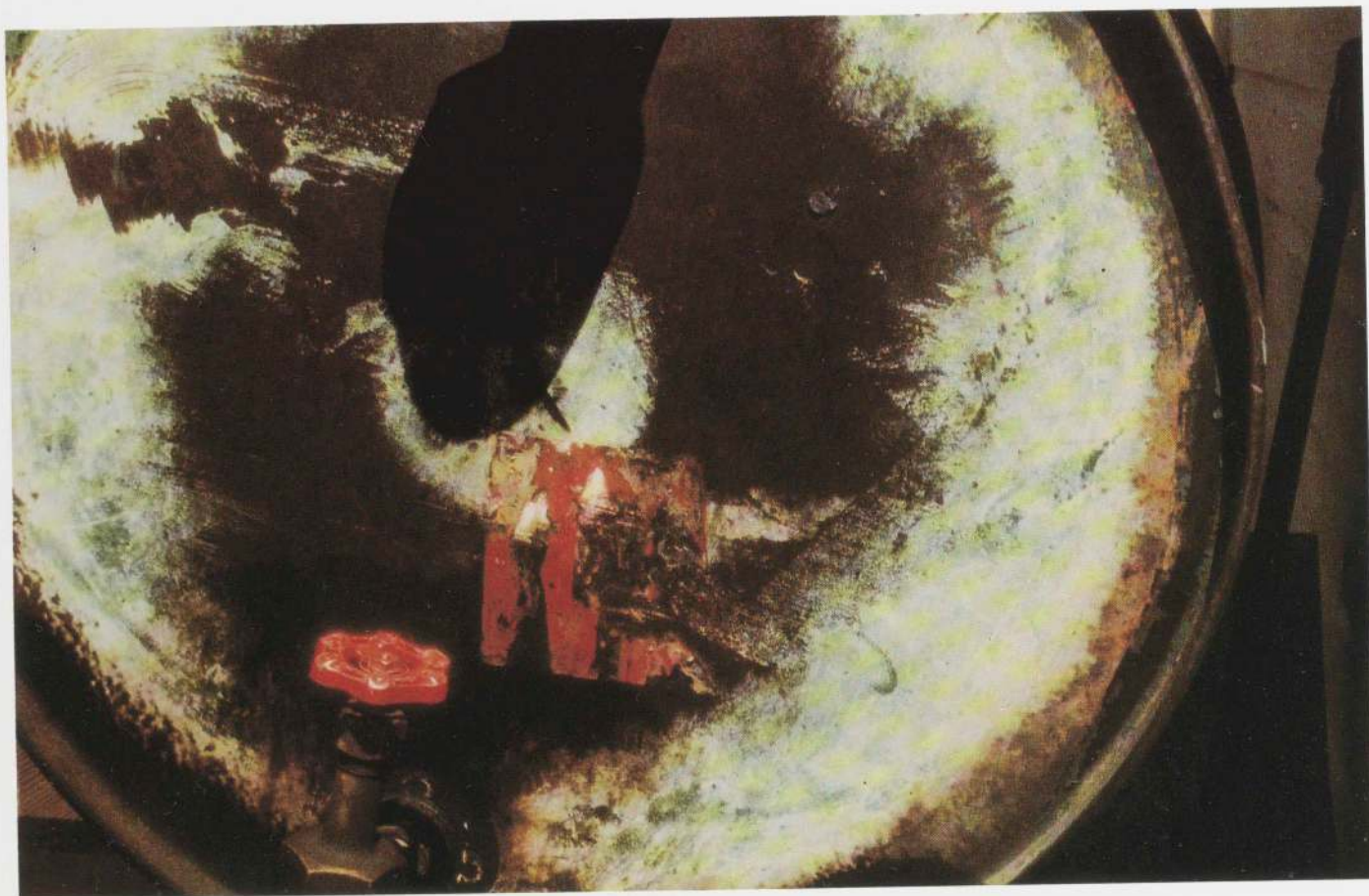
1. Pavilion, New York  
1957





2. Capitol Reef, Utah  
1961





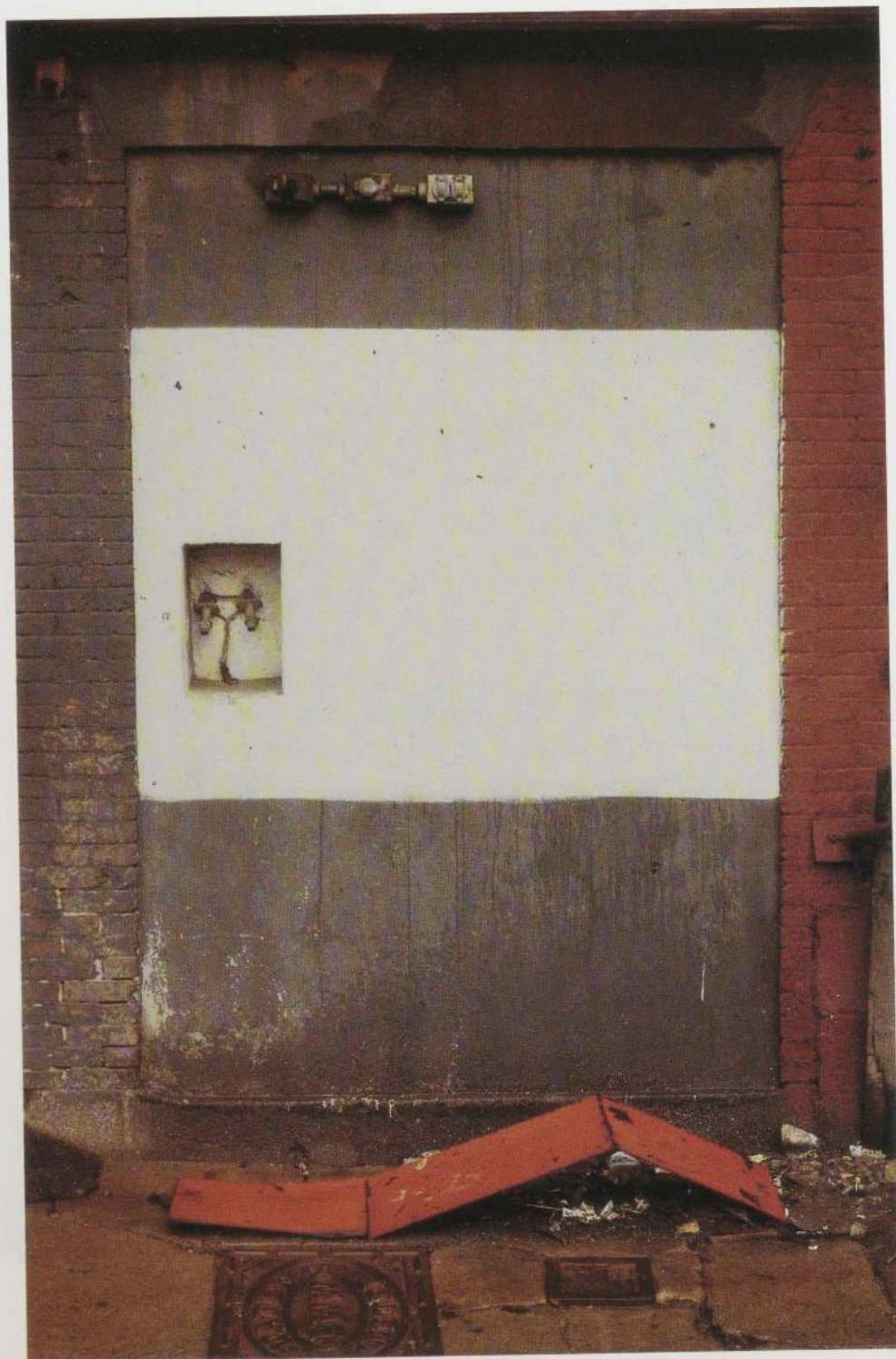
3. Location Unknown  
ca. 1964-66



+ Rome, Italy  
1974

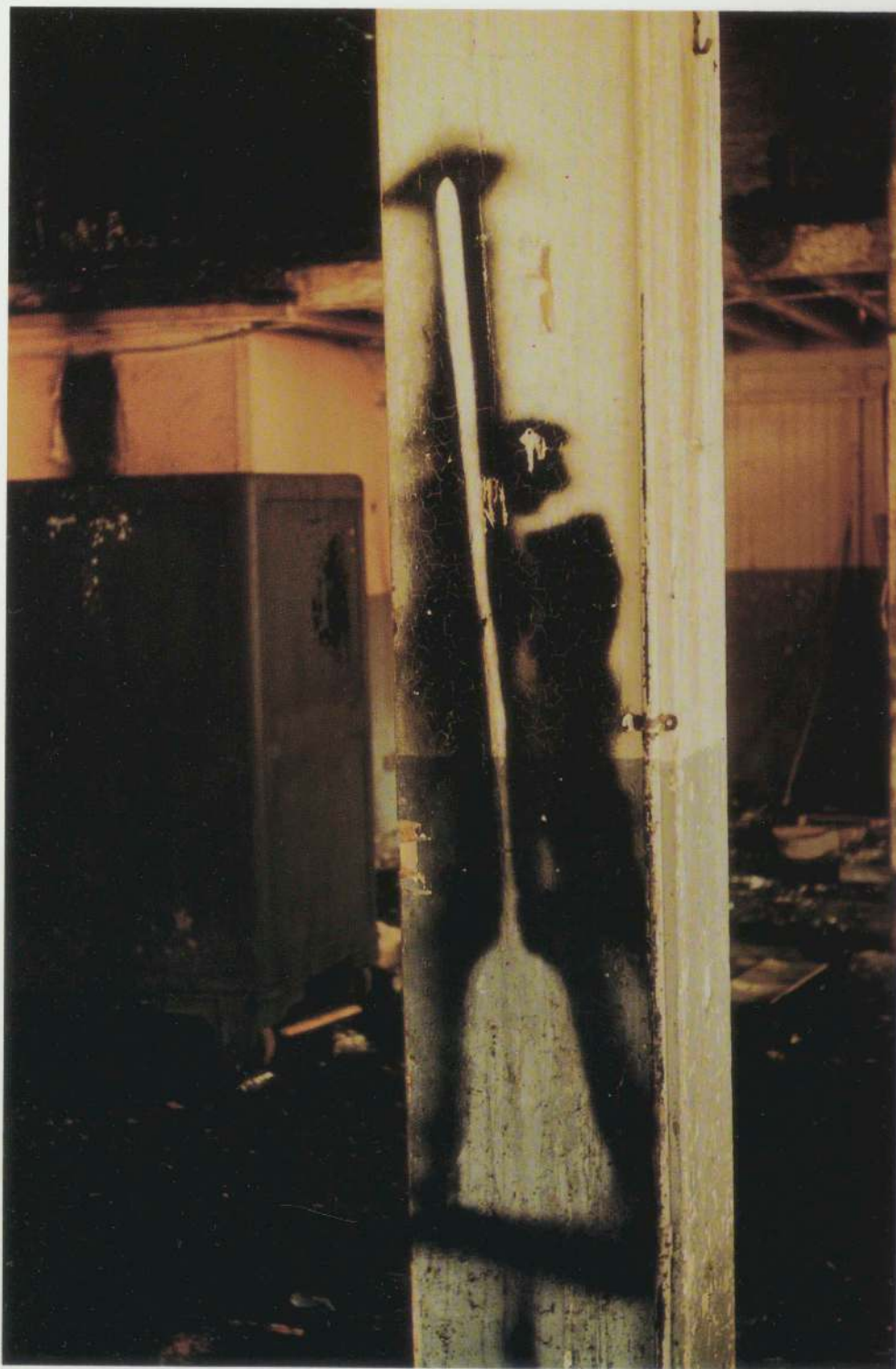






s. Boston  
1971





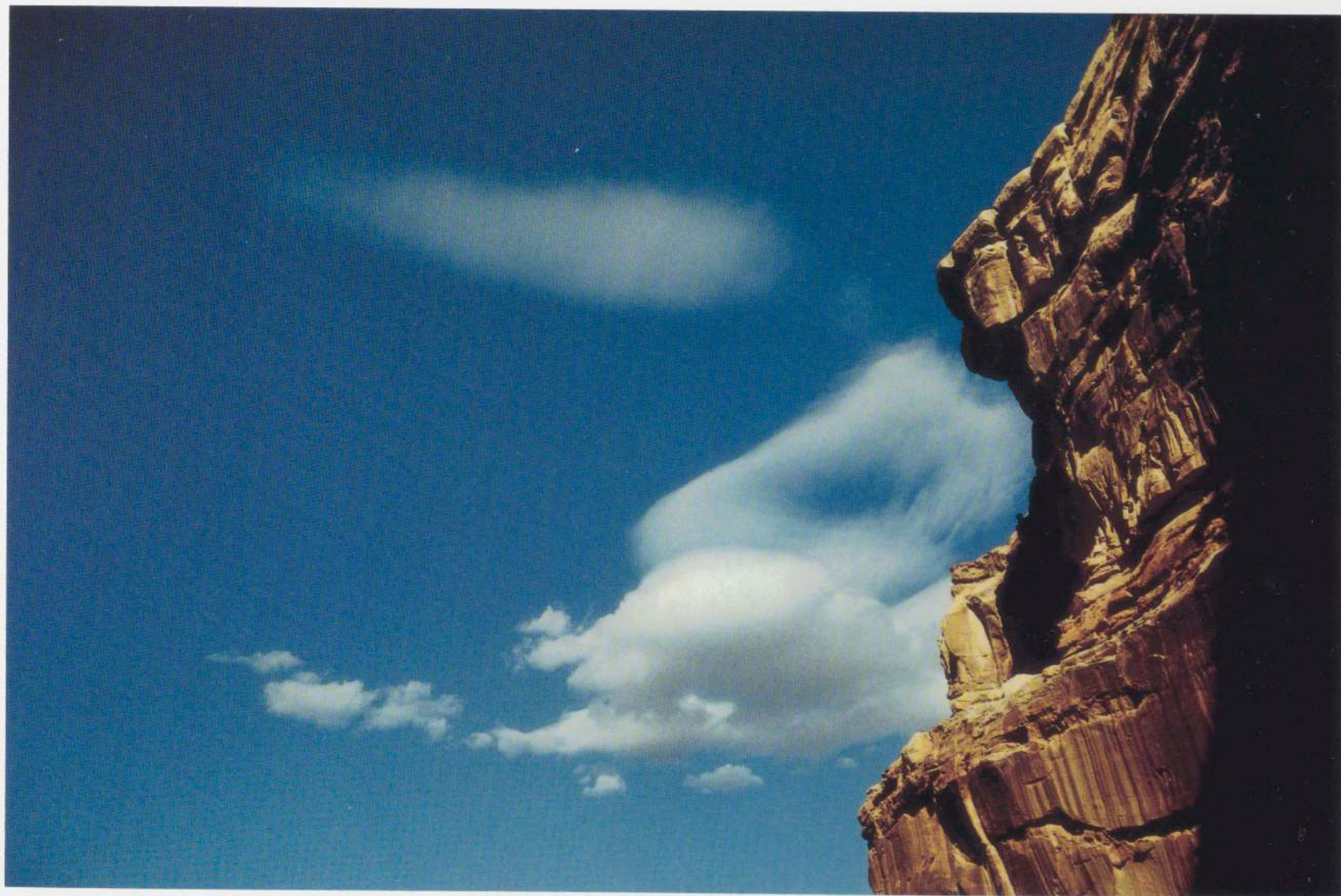
6. San Francisco  
1964



7. Vicinity of Santa Fe, New Mexico  
1966



8. Capitol Reef, Utah  
1964

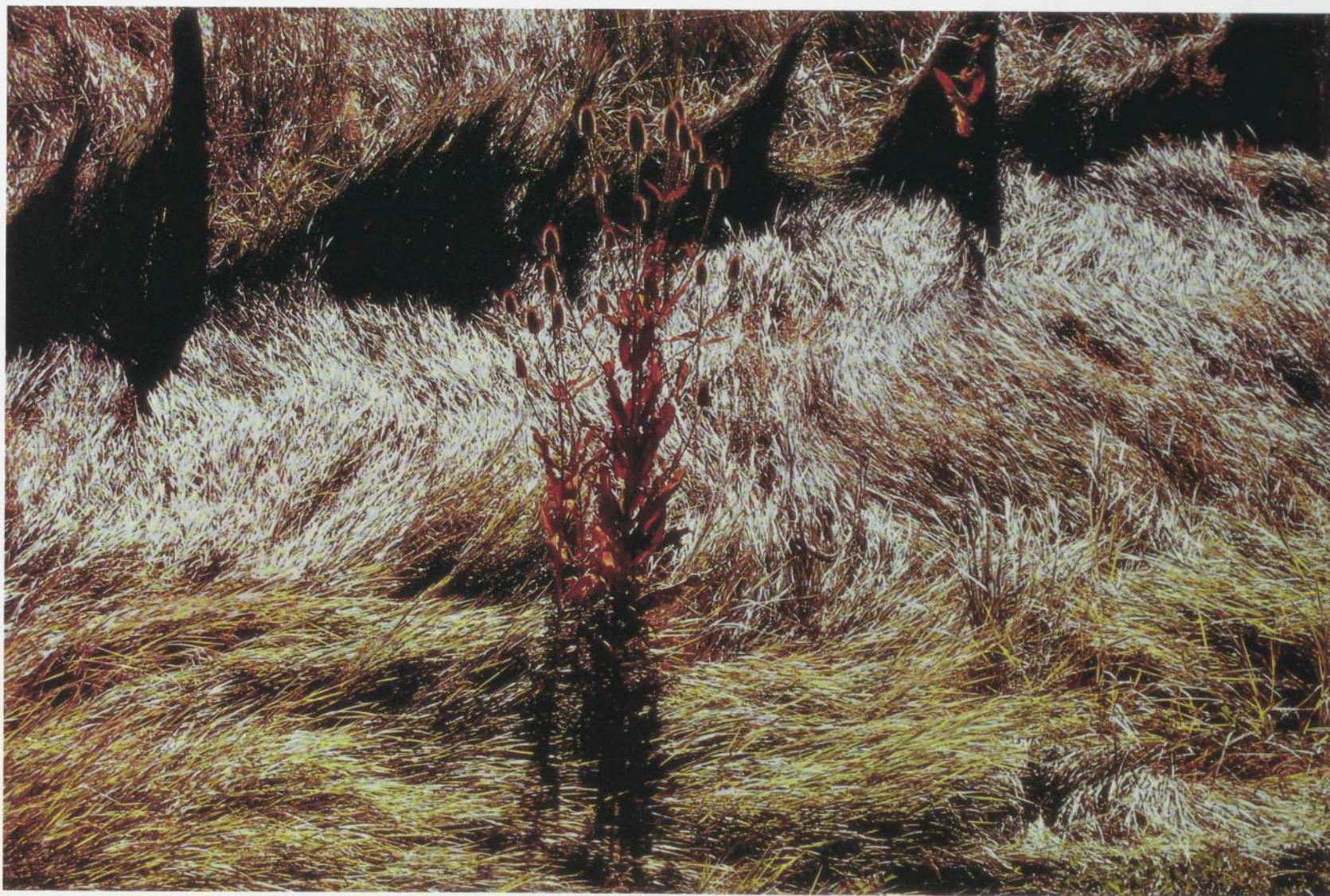








10. Oregon  
1962









# MINOR WHITE

## THE EYE THAT SHAPES

PETER C. BUNNELL

WITH MARIA B. PELLERANO AND JOSEPH B. RAUCH

THE ART MUSEUM, PRINCETON UNIVERSITY

IN ASSOCIATION WITH

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*September 19 – November 12, 1989*

The Minneapolis Institute of Arts  
*January 20 – March 25, 1990*

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*June 22 – August 19, 1990*

International Museum of Photography at George Eastman House,  
Rochester, New York  
*September 21 – November 25, 1990*

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To Beaumont Newhall and to the memory of Nancy Newhall

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# CONTENTS

FOREWORD / XIX
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS / XXI
BIOGRAPHICAL CHRONOLOGY 1908-1976 / 1
INTRODUCTION / 15
UNPUBLISHED WRITINGS / 23
THE PORTFOLIO / 47
PORTFOLIO OF PHOTOGRAPHS / 57
THE SEQUENCE / 231
TOTEMIC SEQUENCE / 237
THE SURVEY / 243
CHRONOLOGICAL SURVEY OF IMAGES / 245
BIBLIOGRAPHY OF PUBLISHED WRITINGS / 273
SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY / 279
CHECKLIST OF THE EXHIBITION / 281

Merrill Lynch is proud to join with The Art Museum, Princeton University, in presenting "Minor White: The Eye That Shapes," the first retrospective of the artist's photographs. We are happy that our grant will make it possible for the public to see and enjoy the work of one of the most imaginative and significant photographic artists of the twentieth century in so many cities throughout the United States: New York, the Museum of Modern Art; Portland, Oregon, Portland Art Museum; Minneapolis, Minneapolis Institute of Arts; San Francisco, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; Rochester, New York, International Museum of Photography, George Eastman House; Boston, Museum of Fine Arts; and Princeton, The Art Museum.

The grant for the exhibition and catalogue is part of Merrill Lynch's ongoing cultural support program that in 1988 earned our firm, for the fifth year, a national "Business In The Arts" award.

William A. Schreyer  
Chairman and Chief Executive Officer  
Merrill Lynch & Co., Inc.

Daniel P. Tully  
President and Chief Operating Officer  
Merrill Lynch & Co., Inc.



## FOREWORD

That The Art Museum is the fortunate beneficiary of the estate of the remarkable photographic artist Minor White is due to the great friendship and mutual respect that existed between Minor White and Peter C. Bunnell, David Hunter McAlpin Professor of the History of Photography and Modern Art in the Department of Art and Archaeology at Princeton. The responsibility for this precious legacy has been accepted with extraordinary dedication by Peter Bunnell.

There is a strong program in the history of photography at Princeton. Many have and continue to contribute to the development of the collection and the teaching program, which were given first impetus and have been seriously fostered by David Hunter McAlpin, Class of 1920, for whom a new facility in the Museum for the collection of photographs has been named. This new study center will allow us to better serve the collection and to use it more effectively for teaching and research.

On this occasion, we are grateful to Merrill Lynch & Co., Inc. for their generous support of the exhibition "Minor White: The Eye That Shapes" and the catalogue. When Merrill Lynch established headquarters in the Princeton area, it was Thomas G. White, senior resident vice president, who first expressed interest in sup-

porting some aspect of the Museum's programs. This spirit was seconded by John L. Steffens, president, Merrill Lynch Consumer Markets, who, because of his great interest in and sensitivity to photography, recognized the importance and uniqueness of the Minor White project. I cannot help but feel confident that they will be pleased with the results and the response to the exhibition and catalogue.

Peter Bunnell has thanked the numerous people and institutions who have been helpful to him in his research and in the preparation of the exhibition and catalogue, and I wish to add my thanks to his. For Peter the exhibition and the catalogue have been a labor of love and rigorous scholarship, and a rich odyssey into the life, mind, and sensibility of Minor White. The work of this extraordinary artist and the archive material will continue to yield, but certainly the trust placed in Peter Bunnell by Minor White has been honored in full measure. The exhibition and catalogue will bring a broader and long overdue public appreciation to the work of Minor White and lead to further investigation and understanding of this exceptional talent. I cannot thank Peter Bunnell enough for this important work and for all he has done to bring distinction to The Art Museum and Princeton University in the field of photography.

Allen Rosenbaum  
Director







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Eugenie Candau, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; and Sandy Britsch, Lois Hendrickson, University of Minnesota.

Over the past several years I have taught seminars in the Department of Art and Archaeology on topics relating to Minor White and his work. I am indebted to the following students, both undergraduate and graduate, who have shared their research with me: Laura Agoston, Dorothy Alexander, William Ambler, Bruce Bernstein, Peter Bixby, John Boyer, Stephen Brown, James Clifton, Sheryl Conkelton, Claude Cookman, Malcolm Daniel, Margaret D'Evelyn, Peter Flagg, Martin Gasser, Bruce Hahn, Jodi Hauptman, Joel Hoffman, Christine Laidlaw, Yong-Hee Last, David Maisel, Philip Maritz, Douglas Nickel, Hedy daCosta Nunes, Maria Pellerano, Lisa Podos, John Pultz, Joseph Rauch, Alan Thomas, Daniel Yang, Robert Yoskowitz, and Susannah Wolfson.

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I thank my colleagues in other museums whose support of Minor White's work is made clear by their arranging for this exhibition to be shown at their respective institutions. In particular, I thank John Szarkowski of the Museum of Modern Art for offering to premiere the exhibition. Others are Clifford Ackley, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; Carroll Hartwell, Minneapolis Institute of Arts; Sandra Phillips, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; Robert Sobieszek, International Museum of Photography, George Eastman House; and Terry Toedtemeier, Portland Art Museum.

The dye transfer prints of Minor White's color imagery especially made for the exhibition, are the work of Nino Mondhe. Their high quality is a testament to his skill and artistry. I am particularly indebted to the Ford Motor Company Fund for the grant that provided The Art Museum with the support to have these new prints made. Robert A. Taub, director of the Corporate Affairs

Planning Office at Ford, was instrumental in assisting us with our application. His sensitive appreciation of fine photography is known to all of us in the field who seek his counsel.

I have had the very good fortune to work with three people at The Art Museum who have helped me with this project. In the preparation of the catalogue, Jill Guthrie, editor of publications, has given her special expertise as a sensitive and perceptive editor, a welcome taskmaster, and a sympathetic friend whose deepest concern is for unaffected expression. Her professionalism has established the tone of this book. Maria Pellerano, assistant curator of photography, has been my colleague in the entire development of this publication and exhibition, as well as a recent partner in the expansion of the photographic collection and study facility in The Art Museum. Her curatorial capabilities and insights have touched every aspect of this project. Joseph Rauch, research assistant, has provided not only helpful service in research and organization, but because of his discernment and sharp, critical sensibility, he has also been particularly helpful to me in the refinement of my ideas about Minor White's work. I am deeply indebted to all three of these colleagues here at Princeton. Away from Princeton, I express my sincere thanks to Mike Weaver, of Oxford University, for our many conversations and our teaching partnerships over the years; these have been some of the most intellectually stimulating and challenging experiences that I have had with any colleague.

I thank other staff members at The Art Museum for their assistance with this project: Philip Burtch, JoAnn Carchman, Susan Lorand, Maureen McCormick, Judy Miller, Kathryn Pinner, Mary Anne Randall, and Charles Steiner. I am particularly grateful to Douglas Nickel for his expert care and attention in the matting and preparation of the prints in the Minor White Archive. Former members of the Museum staff to be thanked are: Sam Fentress, Joyce Giuliani, Robert Lafond, and Gunnar Salmonson.

The elegant design of this book is by Bruce Campbell, a sensitive artist whose understanding of the idiosyncratic ideas of someone like myself, who has lived with these photographs for so long, is most appreciated. In addition, I acknowledge with thanks Stephen Stinchour of the Meriden-Stinehour Press and his col-



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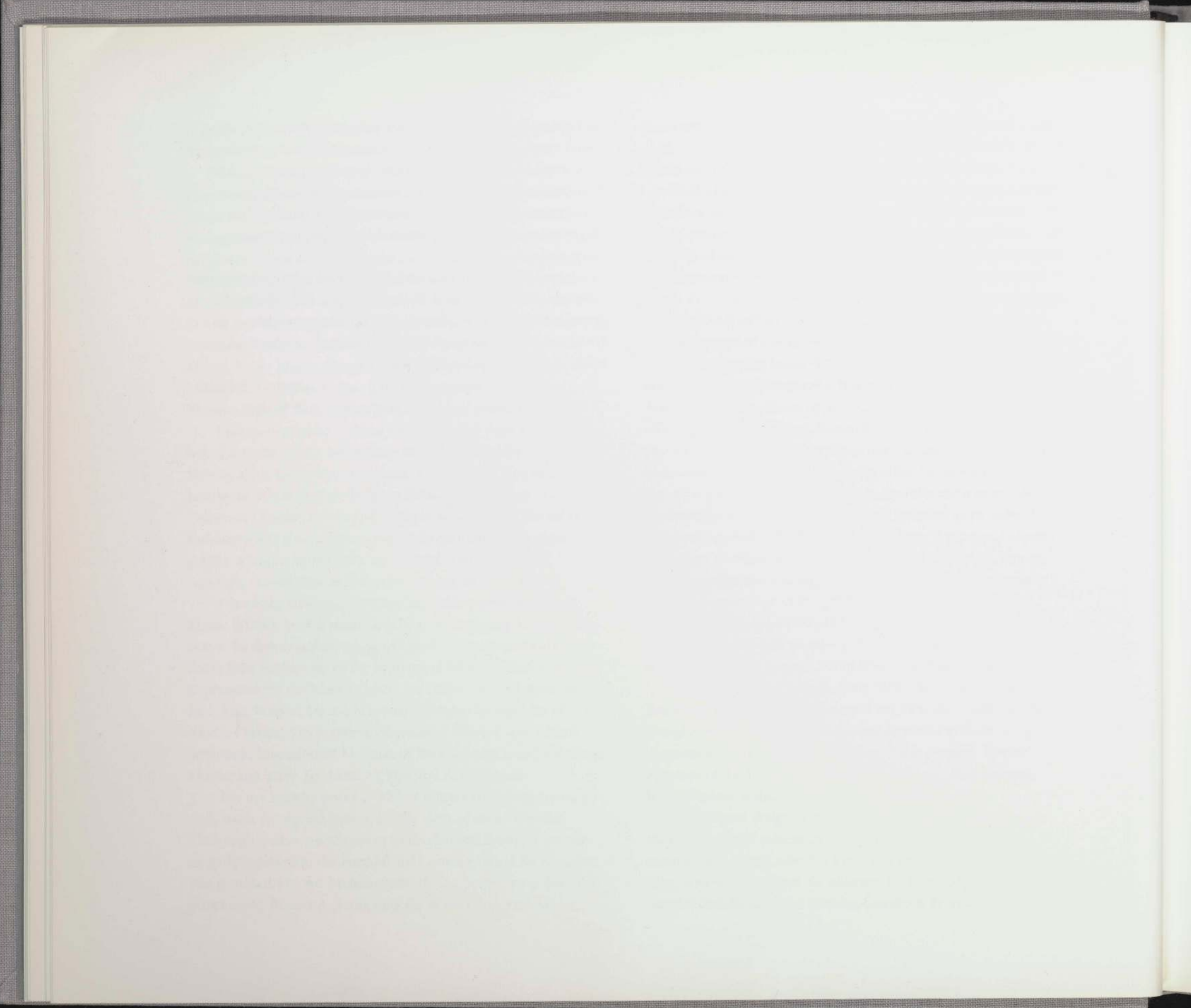
I am especially indebted to Merrill Lynch & Co., Inc. for their generous support of the exhibition and catalogue. John L. Steffens, whose knowledge of photography and enthusiasm for the medium enlivened each of our conversations, committed the company to this project with unusual swiftness and interest. Thomas G. White in Princeton and Courtenay L. Daniels in New York were especially supportive in all of my dealings with the company.

It is particularly meaningful to the Museum that the National Endowment for the Arts has provided two grants in support of the Minor White Archive, one for conservation and archival preparation and a second to support research toward cataloguing and

publication. In addition, I have received several grants from the Spears Fund of the Department of Art and Archaeology to support my research on Minor White. Finally, I am most grateful to Allen Rosenbaum, director of The Art Museum, for his continued encouragement. His enlightened support of photography in the Museum has made many aspects of this endeavor particularly worthwhile.

I would like to conclude with a brief word to acknowledge the great importance that David Hunter McAlpin, Class of 1920, has played in every aspect of photography at Princeton. Without his farsighted and far-reaching benefaction so much of what we have today would not have been possible.

Peter C. Bunnell  
Princeton





# BIOGRAPHICAL CHRONOLOGY 1908–1976

This biographical chronology presents considerable new information on Minor White's youth and formative years and describes and interprets certain of the artist's major photographic works and activities, including the exhibitions he directed. It is an expansion and revision of the chronology prepared by Peter C. Bunnell for the 1982 edition of *Mirrors Messages Manifestations* and is intended to illuminate and provide a rationale for White's development as a photographic artist.

## 1908

Minor Martin White is born July 9 in Minneapolis, Minnesota, the only child of Charles Henry White, a bookkeeper, and Florence May White, nee Martin, a dressmaker. His Christian name is that of his great, great grandfather on the White family side.

## 1908–1915

He lives with his parents on the east side of Lake Calhoun, a suburban area of southwest Minneapolis.

## 1914

He begins his public school education at the Calhoun School.

## 1915–1916

George Martin, his grandfather, who has a private real estate business and who also sells stereopticons, lanterns, and slides for the Beard Art and Stationery Company, gives him a Brownie camera.

## 1916–1929

His parents go through a series of separations, during which his father lives on Fremont Avenue South and his mother lives at the home of her parents, George and Amelia Martin, on Girard Avenue South. It is assumed

that Minor White lives with his mother and his grandparents. During one of their reconciliations, White's parents purchase a home on West 48th Street, and the family lives there together from 1922 until 1928. His mother continues to own this house until her death when it is bequeathed to her son. His parents are divorced in 1929.

## 1924

Having given up art sales in 1917, George Martin, now living with his daughter and son-in-law on West 48th Street, also gives up his local real estate business and moves to Inglewood, California. He leaves his grandson a carbon arc projector and several hundred commercial slides of historical and travel photographs.

## 1927

Minor White graduates from West High School with distinction in science and literature. His yearbook entry records his participation in cross country, the Script Club, and work as an assistant stage manager and carpenter.

He recognizes his homosexual leanings and also discovers that his family has read his diary in which he has recorded his feelings. He is eighteen. After what he later describes as a brief crisis, following which he leaves home for the summer, the subject is apparently never again discussed with his parents. In the fall he returns to live with his family and to begin college.

He enters the University of Minnesota and majors in botany. His course work progressively broadens to include literature and poetry taught by the author, scholar, critic, and influential teacher, Joseph Warren Beach.

He learns the rudiments of photographic processes by making photomicrograph transparencies of algae.

## 1929

He moves into his own apartment and continues studying at the university.



About age ten, 1918  
Minneapolis, Minnesota  
Photographer unknown



High school graduation portrait, 1927  
Minneapolis  
Photograph by Zintsmaster Studio





Age twenty-eight, 1936  
Minneapolis  
Photograph by Elleby Studio



Shore of Lake Superior, 1937  
North of Duluth, Minnesota  
Photograph by Minor White

### 1931

When he fails to meet the requirements for a science degree he leaves the university.

The earliest surviving entry in Minor White's journal is from January 10 of this year. The journal is titled "Memorable Fancies," a phrase derived from the writing of William Blake, and he continues this journal throughout his life. The entries include poetry, excerpts from letters, photographic field notes, itineraries, and most importantly expositions of ideas and meditations on the self.

His father marries Bertha Winkler, an old friend of the family from Minneapolis. Minor White becomes friends with his stepmother and his stepsister, Frances. He remains in contact with both throughout his life.

### 1932–1937

Minor White becomes houseman at the University Club of Minnesota and lives in the attic of the clubhouse. He develops a serious interest in writing. Using free time from his duties as houseman, and later bartender, he begins a five-year program of writing verse, some of which has survived.

### 1933

He enrolls in both night and day courses at the university to obtain credits for graduation.

### 1934

White graduates from the University of Minnesota with a B.A. degree.

### 1935

In spite of his undergraduate performance, he undertakes a half year of graduate work in botany at the University of Minnesota. This experience convinces him he lacks the desire to become a scientist, and he withdraws from the university.

### 1936

His group of friends include graduates of the university, some of whom are homosexual. They all share interests in

books, writing, music, and the out-of-doors. These men and women make frequent outings together. White will remain in contact with some of these people for many years.

He begins a one-hundred-verse "sonnet sequence" on sexual love, his first attempt with a set of poems on one theme.

### 1937

In May, using a newly acquired Argus C3, 35mm camera, he photographs the landscape and his friends on a trip to Lake Superior in northern Minnesota. Prints of these pictures are the earliest of his photographs extant.

T.S. Eliot's *The Wasteland* and especially Walt Whitman's "Calamus Leaves" from *Leaves of Grass* are recorded in his journal as works of major inspiration. Copies of Baudelaire's *Flowers of Evil* and A. E. Housman's 1933 volume *The Name and Nature of Poetry* also survive from his early library. For the remainder of his life, White will seek answers and affirmation in the works of numerous writers, poets, psychologists, and theologians. This process of self-education is eclectic, and his choices may be seen to be reflective of his artistic and emotional needs of the time.

For undetermined reasons, in the summer or early fall he travels west by bus to Portland, Oregon, where he takes a job as a night clerk in the Beverly Hotel. He lives at the YMCA for the next two and a half years.

He joins the Oregon Camera Club, which has a small membership of businessmen and hobbyists with conservative views on photography, favoring the style of late salon Pictorialism. Minor White does not share this group's aesthetics but joins the club primarily to use its facilities, including a library.

### 1938

He takes photographs in the center city for a group from Reed College that is trying to improve housing conditions in Portland. He then works in a secretarial capacity for eight months with the People's Power League, which is contesting the cost of public power from the new Bonneville Dam. He resigns from the Beverly Hotel.

At the YMCA he organizes a photography club with an education and exhibition program. He constructs a modest gallery area in the lobby and a darkroom. He serves as teacher for a group of young adults.



He sees original photographs by pictorialists who exhibit at the camera club in Portland and at the local salon. However, he is influenced most by the works of such photographers as Berenice Abbott, Ansel Adams, Alfred Stieglitz, and Edward Weston, which are known to him only through publications.

As a creative photographer for the Oregon Art Project, an undertaking of the Works Progress Administration's (WPA) Art Program of the Federal Works Agency, he begins photographing the historic nineteenth-century, cast-iron facades and buildings that are being demolished in the Front Avenue neighborhood to create a new river-front development and park.

### 1939

He photographs the Portland commercial waterfront for the Oregon Art Project and continues with the architectural work begun in 1938. These pictures are circulated to various national WPA art centers until 1942.

Renewing his interest in the theater, White makes publicity photographs for the Portland Civic Theater of such plays as *The Death of Tintagiles* and *Our Town*. Three years later he photographs productions of *Jim Dandy* and *Ladies in Retirement*. He also makes character portraits of the actors and actresses.

His circle of friends are primarily theater people and the young photographers, who he is teaching. These people share his interest in literature, the visual arts, and especially music, dance, and theater. A center of their activity is the local art museum, and most are members of a private social club composed of theater people.

### 1940

In June he leaves Portland to teach photography at the La Grande Art Center, a small WPA center in eastern Oregon. By September he is named permanent manager of the center, where he teaches photography three nights a week and lectures on topics such as children's art and Cézanne. He also reviews exhibitions of paintings, etchings, and lithographs by Oregon artists for the local newspaper and delivers regular fifteen-minute broadcasts of art center activities for the La Grande radio station.

He meets Isabel Kane, a physical education instructor at Eastern Oregon State College, whose devotion to the Roman Catholic Church directs him toward the faith in

which he increasingly finds intense personal meaning. The two remain life-long friends and correspond at length.

He spends weekends and vacations photographing the landscape, rural farms, and close-ups of natural elements of eastern Oregon, using a  $3\frac{1}{4} \times 4\frac{1}{4}$  Speed Graphic as a view camera. He visits Portland to see "The Pageant of Photography," an exhibition directed by Ansel Adams for the 1939 Golden Gate International Exposition.

Minor White completes his first article on photography, "When Is Photography Creative?," which is published in *American Photography* in January 1943.

### 1941

He resigns from the art center in mid-October and returns to Portland on November 1 intending to start his own commercial photography business.

Responding to a national solicitation, he has three photographs exhibited in the "Image of Freedom" exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art, New York (MOMA). All three are purchased by the museum.

He meets Walter Chappell on a YMCA youth, cross-country ski trip to Spirit Lake at Mount Saint Helens. Later White and Chappell become close friends, artistic colleagues, and intellectual influences on each other's lives.

Florence White, his mother, marries Robert George; they remain in Minneapolis.

### 1942

He completes his first sequence of photographs, a series or picture story on the 1941 YMCA ski trip to Mount Saint Helens, which is exhibited on panels at the Portland YMCA.

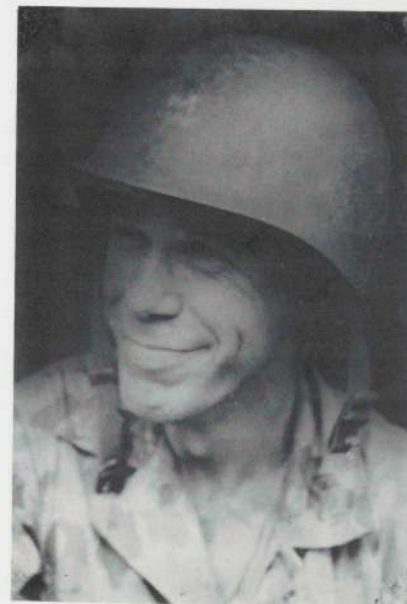
The Portland Art Museum gives him his first one-man exhibition. Four series of photographs made in eastern Oregon are exhibited: Anthony Lakes, Grande Ronde Valley, Union and Baker counties, and Wallowa Mountains.

The first significant reproductions of his photographs appear, four from the Grande Ronde Valley series, in *Fair Is Our Land*, edited by Samuel Chamberlain.

The Portland Art Museum commissions him to photograph two historical residences, the Dolph and Lindley



Photographing, 1941  
Anthony Lakes, Oregon  
Photograph by Isabel Kane [Bradley]



24th Infantry Division Headquarters, 1944  
Mindoro, Philippines  
Photograph by John H. Miller





Division Headquarters, Intelligence Unit, 1945  
Talamo Beach, Davao, Mindanao, Philippines  
Photograph by Freeman Graves



Age thirty-seven, 1945  
Portland, Oregon  
Photograph by Alda Jourdan

houses. These photographs are exhibited in the summer and circulated briefly.

Sue Marden, a member of the Portland Civic Theater group, introduces him to the book *Acting: The First Six Lessons* by Richard Boleslavsky. This work is a prototype for White's unpublished book-length manuscript "Eight Lessons in Photography," which he completes in 1945, and it will be a pivotal source book for him and his students for the next three decades.

He is inducted into the United States Army in April. Before leaving Portland he deposits most of the negatives of his Portland pictures at the Oregon Historical Society.

In May, as a member of the 24th Infantry Division, he is shipped to the island of Oahu, Hawaii, where his unit remains at Brigade Woods for fourteen months. After basic training he is assigned as clerk to the Intelligence Section (S-2) of the 21st Infantry Regiment. He corresponds at length with Isabel Kane throughout the war.

#### 1943

Minor White is baptized into the Roman Catholic Church on Easter Sunday by an army chaplain.

During the war he photographs little, making some posed portraits of enlisted men and officers. Instead, he works on a photography book manuscript and writes poetry.

In July the Division is shipped to Camp Caves near Rockhampton, on the eastern coast of Australia, where it remains for five months.

#### 1944

In January the Division enters the New Guinea campaign, first on Goodenough Island, then Hollandia. In October it proceeds to Leyte, in the southern Philippines, and later to Mindoro and Mindanao. At this time he becomes chief of section in the Divisional Intelligence Branch (G-2), with the rank of master sergeant. His unit, while engaged in the overall assault campaign, is not directly exposed to combat.

Three extended verse cycles are written, "Elegies," "Free Verse for the Freedom of Speech," and "Minor Testament." These poems relate to his experiences in the army and his attitudes about military and political bureaucracy and censorship, war and killing, and the bonds between men under such extreme conditions. The "Minor Testa-

ment," the strongest of the three works, is inspired by the writings of the fifteenth-century French poet, François Villon. Many of the poems from this work White will later utilize in the text for the 1947 sequence of photographs *Amputations*.

#### 1945

In January he is awarded the Bronze Star for his meritorious achievement in connection with military operations. He leaves the Philippines for the U.S. at the end of July and is discharged from the army in September at Fort Louis, Washington.

He travels to New York via Portland and Minneapolis. He shares a room in a residence hotel at 628 West 114th Street with a Columbia University graduate student.

Before the war Robert Tyler Davis, director of the Portland Art Museum, considered developing a curatorial program in photography. To this end Minor White seeks out Nancy and Beaumont Newhall at MOMA, both of whom are known to Davis. He studies museum methods and finds some employment as a photographer at MOMA. Beaumont Newhall, curator of photography at MOMA, becomes White's friend and professional colleague. Nancy Newhall becomes a close friend and correspondent, and an important critical influence on White. She more than anyone is responsible for affirming White's direction within photography, especially in the ten years after 1946.

He enrolls in Columbia University's Extension Division and takes a course in the Philosophy of Art taught by Irwin Edman and an art history lecture course, Development of Art Since the Renaissance. Meyer Schapiro accepts him into his seminars, Research for Advanced Students (two semesters) and Modern Painting and Sculpture, and motivates him to consider a psychological approach to art. White writes three papers under Schapiro's aegis; two of these develop an alteration of Heinrich Wölfflin's *Principles of Art History* for a method of analyzing photographs. The third paper applies the new method to Edward Weston's photographs, which he sees for the first time at a retrospective at MOMA directed by Nancy Newhall. These papers are his first writings on a structured method for examining the content and style of photographic images.

Inspired by Alfred Stieglitz's photographs, Minor White begins a series of photographs of facades on 53d Street



between Fifth and Sixth avenues. Some of these photographs are intended for the unfinished sequence *Fifty Third Street*, 1946.

New York excites his interests in the ballet, art films, and museums, which he visits frequently.

### 1946

In February he has the first of several meetings with Stieglitz at An American Place. Stieglitz's theory of equivalence, where the image stands for something other than the subject matter, and his work with the sequence form, where a series of photographs function metaphorically, are intensely influential on White. His early use of the concept of a set of poems combines with Stieglitz's demonstrated use of sequencing pictorial imagery and causes White to adopt the sequence form almost exclusively for the remainder of his life.

As a member of the Newhalls' social circle, White meets Berenice Abbott, Harry Callahan, Edward Steichen, Paul Strand, Todd Webb, Brett Weston, and Edward Weston, among others.

He makes still life photographs in imitation of Edward Weston.

The Portland Art Museum notifies him that it has abandoned the proposed photography program. White considers a curatorial position offered to him by Edward Steichen, director-designate of the photography program at MOMA. This position is created by the resignation of Beaumont Newhall and partially in deference to him, White declines.

Instead he accepts an offer from Ansel Adams, arranged through the Newhalls, to assist him in teaching photography at the California School of Fine Arts (CSFA), today the San Francisco Art Institute. White arrives in San Francisco in July and he resides at 129 24th Avenue in a house owned by Ansel Adams in which Adams maintains his darkroom. The two men become friends, and for the next decade share an approach to the aesthetics of photographic technique and the interpretation of subject matter. Later, their ideas will diverge, with White often being critical of Adams's rejection of the psychoanalytic basis of making and interpreting photographs, but throughout his life White respects Adams and remains in constant communication with him.

White applies for the first time to the Guggenheim Foundation for a grant to support a writing project to produce one or more books that would aid the talented student photographer exploring expressive camerawork. Although this application is supported by Berenice Abbott, Ansel Adams, Robert Tyler Davis, Douglas MacAgy, Beaumont Newhall, Meyer Schapiro, and Edward Weston, he does not receive the grant.

He renews his friendship with Walter Chappell, also in San Francisco.

In November Minor White visits Edward Weston for the first time at Point Lobos. Weston, who will have the most profound influence on White of any artist, develops a rapport with the younger photographer, and they meet many times before Weston's death in 1958. Based on White's deep admiration for Weston and his work, Point Lobos will become for him a kind of quintessential photographic site, and it is in relation to his understanding of how Weston gained his inspiration here that White will approach Point Lobos and other landscape sites for his own creative purposes.

### 1947

Stimulated by a duality of influences, Edward Weston and Ansel Adams on the one hand, and Irwin Edman, Meyer Schapiro, and Alfred Stieglitz on the other, White formulates his first credo, which emphasizes large format and straightforward photography together with a psychoanalytical approach to content.

Minor White assumes the major teaching responsibility from Ansel Adams at CSFA and is instrumental in developing a three-year photographic program emphasizing personally expressive photography. Homer Page and Frederick Quandt, Jr., join the photography faculty; over the next six years, Lisette Model, Imogen Cunningham, and Dorothea Lange, among others, teach short courses. Minor White and his students interact informally with faculty and students in other departments and have combined exhibitions at local museums. Under Douglas MacAgy's direction, CSFA is a very progressive art school with a painting faculty that includes Elmer Bischoff, Richard Diebenkorn, David Park, Mark Rothko, Hassel Smith, and Clyfford Still.

He joins the Photo League of New York.



Class session, California School of Fine Arts, 1948–49  
San Francisco  
Photograph by Al Richter



129 Twenty-fourth Avenue, 1948  
San Francisco  
Photograph by Tom Murphy





Wildcat Hill with Edward Weston, 1948  
Carmel Highlands, California  
Photograph by Al Richter



Photographing at Point Lobos, 1949  
Carmel, California  
Photograph by Don Normark

The artist completes the sequence *Amputations*, which is scheduled for exhibition at the California Palace of the Legion of Honor, San Francisco, in August. The exhibition is cancelled because the artist refuses to exhibit the pictures alone without their accompanying poetic text. The text is criticized for its length and the quality of writing. White is also criticized for his emphasis on the private emotions of the individual soldier and for the ambiguity of his feelings regarding America's postwar patriotic stance. *Amputations* represents his first grouping of photographs in a non-narrative form. This sequence and all subsequent ones are designed in portfolio form, but all may be shown in wall installation.

An architectural scholar commissions White to photograph the work of Bernard Maybeck. Over the next six years White seeks additional photographic commissions from contemporary California architects. He emphasizes this sort of professional work in his teaching at the CSFA.

#### 1948

In addition to concentrating on landscape during this time, White also executes a substantial body of work in portraiture and figure composition. In these works the hallmarks of White's studio work are theatrical lighting, character revealment, and directorial projection. He explores these techniques in *The Temptation of Saint Anthony Is Mirrors*, a sequence of nudes and portraits of a student model, Tom Murphy. Two years later these techniques culminate in White's *Fifth Sequence / Portrait of Young Man as Actor*, a portrait sequence that is a collaboration between himself and the sitter Mark Adams, an artist and amateur actor.

At the San Francisco Museum of Art he exhibits the sequence *Song Without Words*, which is circulated by the American Federation of Arts. Both this sequence and *The Temptation of Saint Anthony Is Mirrors* are works in which White seeks to depict the emotional turmoil he feels over his love and desire for men. *The Temptation of Saint Anthony Is Mirrors*, in which he affectionately portrays the nude body itself, is the most explicit and is never exhibited publicly.

He arranges an exhibition of CSFA student work for the Photo League of New York.

#### 1949

He begins photographing plays, such as *Dear Judas, Family Reunion*, *Lady from the Sea*, *No Exit*, and *Well of the Saints*, for the Interplayers. He continues photographing this theater group and others during the next four years, frequently assisted by CSFA students.

Using a Zeiss Ikonta B camera, the artist begins a massive project of small camera urban street photography, which is conceived under the title "City of Surf." The project, which follows his interest in the poetry of Walt Whitman, continues over four years with some 6,000 negatives exposed and in Whitmanesque terms is thought to be a catalogue of everything in the city. Among other things he photographs Chinatown, new suburban housing, the docks, the financial district, people on the streets, at art fairs, at parades, and at the circus.

#### 1950

The CSFA photography program is now fully formed and integrated into the school. In a description of the curriculum and aims of the program, White writes that it is intended to develop in the student a love of the medium through mastery of it and a sense of responsibility for his own pictures and to encourage students to make art of and/or in spite of their psychological conflicts.

He writes a letter to Isabel Kane Bradley explaining that he is giving up the Roman Catholic Church because he feels the rituals obscure his personal touch with God. However, he retains a belief in monastic Catholicism, and he attends Mass on several occasions later in his life.

The *Fourth Sequence* is completed. The grouping of ten images is recognized by most viewers as being highly erotic and utterly revealing of his personal frustration and inner conflicts regarding his sexuality and his attitudes toward women. It is the first of his sequences to concentrate on abstract imagery, and the introductory text is his most complete statement to date on the nature of the sequence form and on abstraction in photographic imaging.

His father and stepmother move to Long Beach, California.

#### 1951

He applies again for support from the Guggenheim Foundation for a writing project to produce for students an



illustrated text on the analysis of style based on the depiction of space in a photograph. This application is supported by Ansel Adams, Douglas MacAgy, Ernest Mundt, Beaumont Newhall, Nancy Newhall, and Edward Weston. He does not receive the grant.

White is introduced to the dancer William Smith by Valentina Omansky, a dancer White knew in Portland who is now in San Francisco. His intimate friendship with Smith is sustained by intermittent contact and extensive correspondence throughout his life. Smith, who becomes the subject of *Sequence II / The Young Man as Mystic*, 1955, introduces White to Christian mysticism.

White moves to a loft adjacent to the Embarcadero at 135 Jackson Street. He directs the exhibition "Focus Unlimited," of CFSA student work, which shows at CFSA and at the Portland Art Museum.

He participates in the Conference on Photography at the Aspen Institute for Humanistic Studies, Aspen, Colorado. Other participants include, Berenice Abbott, Ansel Adams, Herbert Bayer, Ferenc Berko, Will Connell, Dorothea Lange, Beaumont and Nancy Newhall, Frederick Sommer, Paul Vanderbilt. The future of photographic publications is discussed, and the idea for a photographic quarterly is developed.

#### 1952

*Aperture* magazine is founded by the artist and Ansel Adams, Melton Ferris, Dorothea Lange, Ernest Louie, Barbara Morgan, Beaumont Newhall, Nancy Newhall, and Dody Warren. White is made editor and production manager, with the editorial office in White's San Francisco loft. The first issue appears in April.

His father and stepfather die.

#### 1953

He directs the exhibition "How to Read a Photograph," composed primarily of his own photographs, for the San Francisco Museum of Art Extension Division.

Walter Chappell introduces Minor White to *The I Ching*, an ancient Chinese book of divination that uses a chart of hexagrams to predict the outcome of events. This philosophy of chance and change influences White greatly, and he continues to use *The I Ching* throughout his life even when later subscribing to other philosophies.

A reorganization of the program at the CSFA results in White being assigned a limited teaching role. He seeks temporary employment elsewhere. The Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT) has a teaching position available in 1954, and Beaumont Newhall, now the curator of photography at George Eastman House (GEH), invites him to join the staff for a year. In November he moves to Rochester to live and work, intending to return to San Francisco. Instead, he remains for three years at GEH, during which time he directs several small shows, a retrospective of the photo-journalist Alfred Eisenstaedt and three significant theme exhibitions: "Camera Consciousness," "The Pictorial Image," and "Lyrical and Accurate."

Upon his arrival in Rochester, he lives for four months at the Newhall home and then in a loft in downtown Rochester at 72 North Union Street, where he remains until 1965.

#### 1954

Helen Gee gives him his first New York City one-man exhibition at the Limelight Gallery. On occasional visits to New York, he makes personal contact with major New York photography critics and writers.

During his first three years in Rochester, there is considerable frustration with the pictorial possibilities of the western New York State landscape and the city of Rochester. This is evidenced by a dramatic drop in the number of photographs he makes this year and through 1956.

#### 1955

He joins the faculty of RIT on a one-day-a-week basis, teaching a course in photo-journalism for one year.

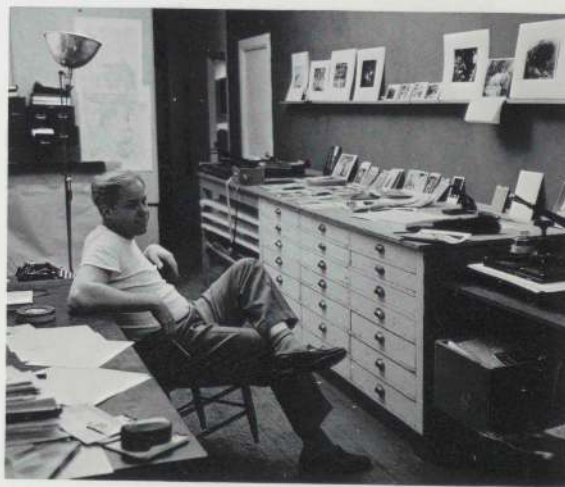
As Minor White becomes known in the academic photographic community, he begins to give public lectures and one-day student seminars. The first of these is at Ohio University, Athens.

He accepts his first student in residence, John Upton. Paul Caponigro, among others, is later in residence. Resident students become a fundamental part of White's personal and teaching life for the remainder of his career.

Deciding not to return to San Francisco, he requests in November that all his belongings stored there, including books, photographs, and darkroom equipment, be shipped to Rochester.



Photographing the Hall House, 1949  
Marin County, California  
Photograph by Philip Hyde



135 Jackson Street, 1951  
San Francisco, California  
Photographer unknown





Interior of 72 N. Union Street, 1957  
Rochester, New York  
Photographer unknown



72 N. Union Street, 1956  
Rochester  
Photograph by A. W. Rossetto, Esq.

In December a period of intense reading in comparative religions begins; the books include *Mysticism* by Evelyn Underhill, *Zen and the Art of Archery* by Eugen Herrigel, and *Doors of Perception* by Alduous Huxley.

The artist begins making 35mm color transparencies.

Minor White completes *Sequence 10 / Rural Cathedrals*. It is his first sequence produced from eastern landscape photographs. In an attempt to invigorate the landscape, the artist sometimes uses infrared film. The sequence is a translation in symbols of Evelyn Underhill's steps or stages of the "Mystic Way." The sequence content suggests a change in tone that will gradually appear in his pictorial work, one that reflects an increasing spiritual concern. The 1960 sequence *Sound of One Hand* will further exemplify this direction.

### 1956

White becomes editor of *Image* magazine at GEH.

He begins conducting workshops, a type of concentrated student seminar that includes lectures, field sessions, and print critiques. Workshops are given over weekends and are coordinated and sponsored by colleagues and former students. The first of these is at Indiana University, Bloomington, at the invitation of the teacher and critic Henry Holmes Smith. White continues leading workshops throughout his life, many lasting a week or more, and eventually he sponsors his own workshops.

In November he visits Edward Weston for the last time before Weston's death.

In August he resigns from GEH. Almost immediately he accepts an appointment to the faculty of RIT as a part-time instructor in a newly formed four-year photography program. He teaches sophomore visual communication, senior illustration, and initiates a course in photography for art majors of other media, all of which continue while he is at RIT. Other RIT photography faculty members include Charles Arnold and Ralph Hattersley.

He participates in biweekly evening workshops for students and others in the Rochester area, which continue intermittently for three years. One of the participants, Nathan Lyons, a young photographer and editor who is on the staff of GEH, later becomes leader. Walter Chappell, who now resides in Rochester and who is on the staff of GEH, is also involved. The three form the core of a

group of serious photographers concerned with the medium in and around Rochester.

Following his readings in comparative religions, White becomes more interested in Oriental ways of life. He pursues a simplified manner of cooking, adopts a Japanese style of interior decoration, and creates special places in his home for the practice of Zen meditation.

Peter Bunnell, a student at RIT, begins to study with Minor White at the school and at White's residence. Bunnell assists the artist in teaching the course for art majors and works on *Aperture*. Bunnell's involvement with *Aperture* continues intermittently for several years, and his association with the artist continues throughout White's life.

### 1957

During the summer Minor White begins preliminary work on a large exhibition-sequence of photographs titled *Ashes Are for Burning*. It is exhibited at GEH in 1959 as *Sequence 13 / Return to the Bud*.

White is commissioned by William Gratwick to photograph tree peonies, plants, and flowers at the Gratwick home in Pavilion, New York. He continues photographing peonies until a portfolio is completed in 1960. The Gratwick estate is a center for the Rochester art, music, and intellectual community. Walter Chappell, Ted Ishwani, Beaumont and Nancy Newhall, William Smith, and Minor White are among those who frequent the informal gatherings at the Gratwick home.

Walter Chappell and Minor White renew their discussions about the Gurdjieff philosophy, which the two men had begun in San Francisco about 1952. The teachings of the Russian mystic G. I. Gurdjieff (ca. 1872-1949) meshed with many of the ideas about self-discovery and group dynamics that White had already formulated. White at first rejects certain aspects of the Gurdjieff discipline, but he gradually becomes a serious adherent of this philosophy that focuses on consciousness and understanding of the self. The awareness and concentration exercises that Gurdjieff developed, including those involving movement and dance, become an integral part of White's later teaching method. In spite of the esoteric nature of the Gurdjieff philosophy, numerous works comprise its fundamental literature. Several books, including Gurdjieff's *All and Everything*, P. D. Ouspensky's *In Search of the Miraculous*,



and *The Psychology of Man's Possible Evolution*, and René Dumas's *Mount Analogue*, are staples on White's reading lists for classes and workshops.

White and Chappell publish "Some Methods for Experiencing Photographs" in *Aperture*, an article that outlines the Gurdjieffian methods of attention and directed attention and introduces them to the photographic field.

He is introduced to the dancer Drid Williams by William Smith. She and White become close friends for the remainder of his life. She shares with him not only an interest in the dance but in anthropology and the dynamics of creative expression generally. In 1962 she travels across the country with him, and the photographs he makes of her that summer become part of the foundation for *Sequence 17*, of 1963.

#### 1958

He purchases a 4 x 5 Sinar view camera.

White is commissioned by the Strassenburgh Laboratories of Rochester to make color and black and white documentary and advertising photographs of a large ceramic mural executed by Frans Wildenhain.

#### 1959

In April the exhibition of *Sequence 13 / Return to the Bud* opens at GEH. This work of 115 photographs is his largest show to date, and the sequence itself is his most extended autobiographical statement thus far. The work incorporates pictures drawn from all of his previous sequences, sometimes in new contexts or juxtapositions, and the individual prints and texts are mounted directly on multicolored panels.

White purchases a Leica 35mm camera.

As part of the Oregon centennial celebration, the GEH *Sequence 13* exhibition is shown during the summer in Portland. At the urging of Gerald Robinson, an attorney and serious local photographer, White is invited by the Centennial Commission to conduct a ten-day workshop, with all his expenses paid to and from Portland. White thus makes his first summer trip across the United States, traveling in Montana, Oregon, California, Nevada, Wyoming, and South Dakota. The experience of photographing on this first trip reveals to him immense opportunities for photographing the landscape in the west.

These summer trips made in an elaborately outfitted van-camper continue regularly until 1967. On these trips the artist is accompanied by a companion, usually a student.

He successfully seeks support to finance future trips by arranging workshops during the summer months. In keeping with the tenor of the 1960s, the workshops do not stress mere technical expertise but are directed toward what he terms personal growth through camerawork; a direct appeal to those persons, especially young people, seeking alternative methods of education and a new approach to life.

At the Portland workshop he meets William LaRue, a school teacher and serious photographer from Oakland, California. LaRue becomes successively the subject of portraits that appear in later sequences of White's photographs, a traveling companion, and workshop assistant.

During the academic year he conducts the first full-time resident workshop at his home in Rochester, a method of teaching in which students learn through a combination of formal sessions and the less formal discipline of household chores. He continues this type of workshop for the remainder of his life.

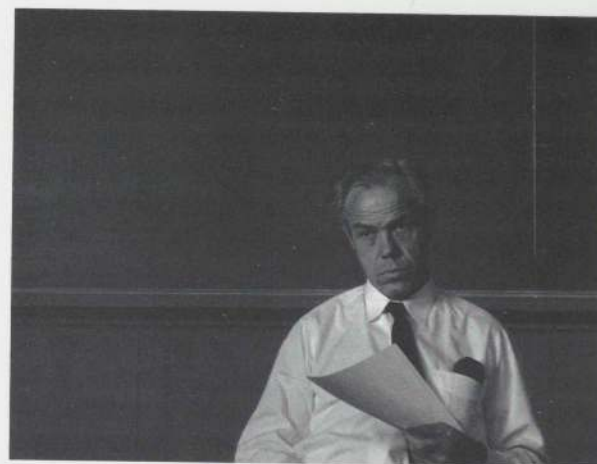
"The Way Through Camera Work" is published in *Aperture*. The article is a definitive statement of White's philosophy of photography and one that he follows with only slight variation thereafter.

#### 1960

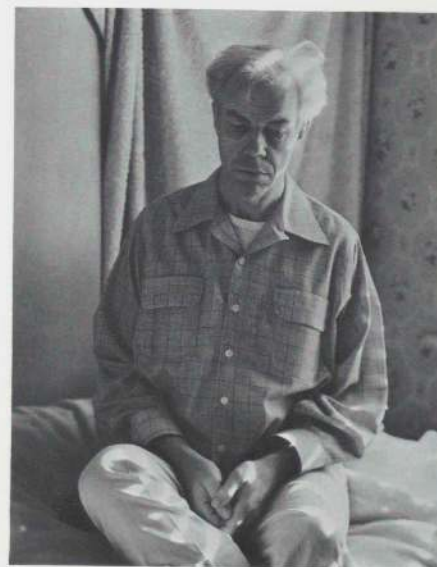
He outlines his manuscript "Canons of Camerawork." This is the first of several long unpublished manuscripts written by the artist. He later writes "Conscious Photography," and "Creative Audience," which he continues to revise and retit. These manuscripts elucidate his approach to teaching, including what he has incorporated from the Gurdjieff method, and are also continuations of the earlier texts proposed to the Guggenheim Foundation.

He explores the technique of hypnosis for the next two years and gradually begins to introduce it into his teaching in order to accelerate the process of concentration.

He joins a Gurdjieff group in Rochester under the leadership of Louise March, who becomes a personal adviser. Over several years he will also visit William Nyland, another leader, in New York.



Class session, Rochester Institute of Technology, 1957  
Rochester  
Photograph by Owen B. Butler

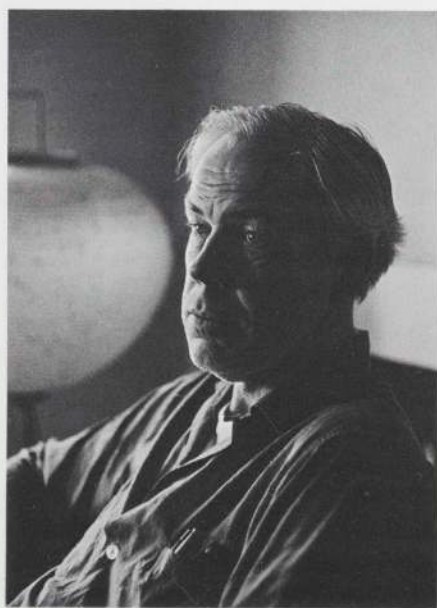


72 N. Union Street, Rochester, ca. 1958  
Rochester  
Photographer unknown





Class session, Isomata Foundation Workshop, 1961  
Idyllwild, California  
Photographer unknown



72 N. Union Street, 1962  
Rochester  
Photograph by Leslie S. Goldstein

The sequence *Steely the Barb of Infinity* is completed. The portrayal of an intense experience between White and a student, this sequence is executed at the end of a failed relationship as the means of working out for himself the emotions of this involvement. In a series of eleven photographs, he reveals in a highly abstract form his thoughts on his ability to sustain a relationship, his role as a teacher, and the fundamental notion of death and rebirth. The theme ultimately is that one must destroy or be destroyed in order to be awakened or reborn.

#### 1961

White visits the photographer Frederick Sommer in Arizona in order to edit Sommer's monograph issue of *Aperture*. He also seeks Sommer's comments on his own manuscript "Canons of Camerawork." Sommer recommends that White visit Capitol Reef National Monument, Utah, which White photographs later in the summer. He is immensely impressed by this site and feels it is similar to Weston's Point Lobos. He returns frequently to record what he terms the richness of equivalence there.

In the summer he leads a workshop in Portland, Oregon, at the conclusion of which a core group of participants form an interim workshop that will exchange photographs and taped critiques with White by mail during the year. Interim workshops continue until 1967.

A workshop is given at the Isomata Foundation, Idyllwild, California. The performance of a dance group here further stimulates the artist's interest in incorporating exercises of body kinesthetics into his teaching techniques.

#### 1962

He gives the first of three Denver workshops, which is documented through the publication *A Notebook Résumé* by Arnold Gassan, the workshop coordinator. White meets Michael Hoffman, a student at this workshop. Hoffman becomes a friend and professional colleague as managing editor-publisher, and later editor, of *Aperture*. The artist will name him the executor of his estate.

White is a founding member of the Society for Photographic Education.

#### 1963

Sequence 17 / *Out of My Love for You I Will Give You Back Yourself* is completed. Composed of landscapes and por-

trait images of Drid Williams and William LaRue, it is a sequence about the understanding of self, of choice, commitment, and the physical and emotional relationships between male and female.

At the second conference of the Society for Photographic Education, in Chicago, White gives the lecture "Is There a Place for a Functional Criticism in Camera Image Making?"

#### 1964

He photographs the First Unitarian Church in Rochester for the architect Louis I. Kahn.

#### 1965

In February Minor White is appointed visiting professor in the School of Architecture and Planning at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). The course in photography that he teaches is part of a larger program to allow MIT students to experience creativity, especially in the visual arts, outside of their majors, and it is based in the Department of Architecture. He begins teaching one course with one assistant and by 1968 builds the photography program to five courses with two additional instructors and five assistants. A permanent exhibition space, the Creative Photography Gallery, is established, and the whole facility is seen as a kind of laboratory for the education of the whole person. One of the instructors is Jonathan Green, a photographer with a graduate academic background in the humanities who becomes White's principal associate in the program at MIT. He will also assist White with *Aperture* and in the organization of exhibitions.

White purchases a twelve-room house at 203 Park Avenue, Arlington, Massachusetts, which in addition to providing ample working space allows him to increase the number of workshops and the number of resident students.

The artist's mother dies.

He directs "Exhibition One," the work of twenty-two Boston area photographers in the Creative Photography Gallery, MIT.

He becomes active in a Gurdjieff group in the Boston area and takes on a leadership role. Dorothea M. Dooling, a Gurdjieff leader based near New York, frequently visits



the Boston group and begins to advise him. In 1976 the two co-found the publication *Parabola / Myth and the Quest for Meaning*, a magazine published in New York.

He completes *Slow Dance*, a sequence of eighty color transparencies intended for dual screen projection and inspired by his continuing interest in movement, most importantly the Gurdjieff rhythmic rituals. It is frequently shown at his major workshops and public appearances and is integrated later into his course Creative Audience.

White accepts temporary editorship of *Sensorium*, a proposed magazine of photography and the arts of communication based in Denver. It is never published.

He begins work with the techniques of Gestalt psychology, utilizing the book *Gestalt Therapy* by Perls, Hefferline, and Goodman. He also introduces drawing into his teaching curriculum as a means for students to further experience and understand the concept of equivalency.

#### 1966

Signs of illness begin to appear, diagnosed as angina.

In December the artist begins work on *Mirrors Messages Manifestations*, the first monograph publication of his photographs.

#### 1967

Meyer Schapiro visits the artist in Arlington when Schapiro is a visiting professor at Harvard.

White is elected a founding trustee of the Friends of Photography in California and serves as trustee until 1976.

When his angina condition worsens, distinct psychological and physiological effects occur: White sets new priorities and goals; makes significant changes in diet; and becomes more deeply interested in meditation.

#### 1968

He undertakes the study of astrology and has his first chart made by a Boston astrologer, Anna Crebo. Astrology becomes so important to White that he has charts made of his students and even prospective students.

*Mirrors Messages Manifestations*, the only book conceived and executed by the artist on his own work, is completed. A folio volume, it is an elaboration of the exhibition *Sequence 13 / Return to the Bud* created in 1959. The book contains 243 photographs and excerpted texts drawn from his journals and other writings, together with extensive biographical and bibliographical documentation by Peter Bunnell. A reprinted and enlarged edition is published in 1982.

As part of his new priorities, White slowly discontinues travel in the west. He participates less in the workshop network there, favoring workshops on the east coast and resident workshops. His needs to travel and photograph the landscape are fulfilled by short trips to Maine, Vermont, and Nova Scotia.

*Sequence 1968* and *Sequence 1970*, retitled in 1974 the *Totemic Sequence*, are the last sequences completed in his life, and they are composed of eastern landscape imagery. The latter sequence is composed entirely of pictures made at Schoodic Point, Maine, a site for which he feels a special resonance. It is one of his most mature and complex image structures, composed of starkly vivid images of rock forms on which water stains metamorphose into animal forms reminiscent of prehistoric cave paintings. The sequence of ten pictures includes two prints that are made through the technique of double printing, or the sandwiching of two negatives, a practice used by White with increasing frequency in his later years.

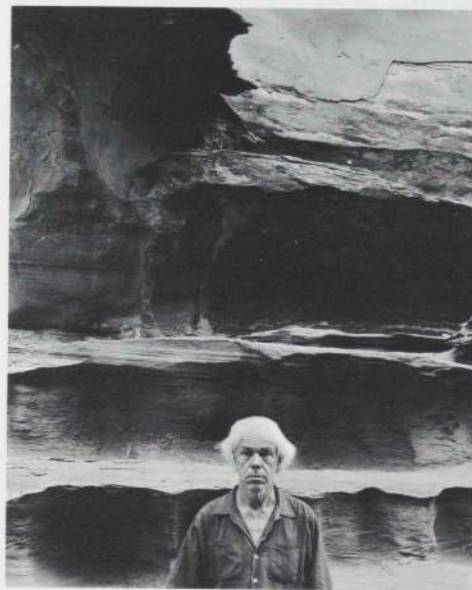
Minor White directs the exhibition "Light?" for the Hayden Gallery, MIT. In an open call for photographs, the aim of the exhibition is described as the illustration through photography of the regions where the four creative manifestations—art, religion, psychology, and science—overlap. He establishes a permanent collection of photographs at MIT, the first drawn from this exhibition.

After White's health reaches a serious low point, his angina stabilizes. Self-education continues through reading, a central book being *The Encounter of Man and Nature* by Seyyed Nasr.

#### 1969

"Critique: Light?" is televised over National Educational Television. The program includes an on-camera interview with Minor White.

He receives tenure at MIT.



Age fifty-nine, 1967  
Capitol Reef, Utah  
Photograph by Arthur Lazar

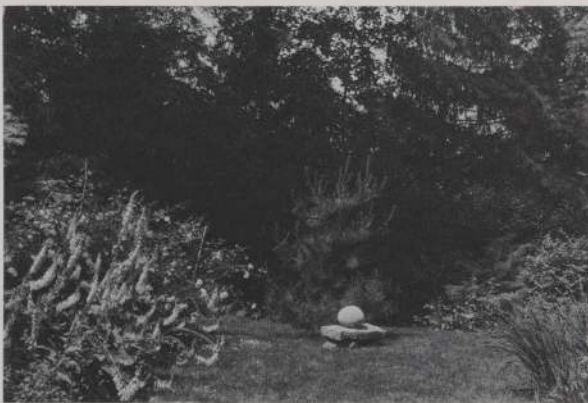


203 Park Avenue with Peter de Lory, 1972  
Arlington, Massachusetts  
Photograph by Andrew de Lory





Age sixty-two, 1970  
Lincoln, Vermont  
Photograph by Douglas Prudden



Garden at 203 Park Avenue, 1976  
Arlington  
Photograph by Peter Bunnell

White begins his association with Princeton University when he is invited by the alumnus and photography collector David H. McAlpin to give the annual Alfred Stieglitz Memorial Photography Lecture there. He speaks on "Photography and Inner Growth," and his sequence *Sound of One Hand* is acquired for the collection.

*Mirrors Messages Manifestations* is published in November by Aperture, Inc. The book provokes the first significant body of critical writing about his work.

#### 1970

Minor White receives a Guggenheim Foundation Fellowship for the writing project "Consciousness in Photography and the Creative Audience." The application is supported by Ansel Adams, Laurence Anderson, Beaumont Newhall, and Meyer Schapiro. In this manuscript White outlines exercises to enable one to reach a state of active concentration, called heightened awareness, required to read a photograph and for groups to discuss pictures. At MIT he begins to teach the course "Creative Audience."

In January the Philadelphia Museum of Art organizes a one-man exhibition of Minor White's work titled "Towards These . . . The Circle, The Square, The Triangle . . . A Life in Photography on a Theme." The exhibition is conceived by White utilizing over 200 photographs from *Mirrors Messages Manifestations* and is organized by Michael Hoffman, an adviser to the museum. The museum acquires the collection of photographs following a national tour.

Minor White organizes the first Hotchkiss Workshop in Creative Photography, held in rented space at the Hotchkiss School, Lakeville, Connecticut. These workshops continue for four more years.

He directs the exhibition "Be-ing Without Clothes" for the Hayden Gallery, MIT. The second in a series of four theme exhibitions, the aim of this one is to address the naked human body, referred to as perhaps the most difficult subject in creative photography, and to show what photographers can bring of life and vitality to the image of the human being without clothes.

He is awarded an Honorary Doctorate of Fine Arts from the Maryland Institute College of Art.

#### 1971

In January he makes the first of two visits to Puerto Rico for health reasons. On each he devotes considerable time to photographing in color.

White participates in the founding of Imageworks, a school of photography and related media in Boston and serves on its Advisory Board.

#### 1972

Jerry Uelsmann, on behalf of a group of White's other former students and colleagues, requests that White attend an informal retreat, and together they organize the event. Frederick Sommer is invited as a special guest. The week-long session is held at Sippewisset on Cape Cod with Peter Bunnell, Carl Chiarenza, Allen Dutton, Jonathan Green, Robert Heineken, Jerome Liebling, and Jack Welpott in attendance.

White directs the exhibition "Octave of Prayer" for the Hayden Gallery, MIT. The theme of this exhibition is particularly challenging and concerns the power of photography, a medium of the external world, to reveal inwardness and the realm of prayer. In the exhibition White seeks to identify the shape or space in the outer world that corresponds to the space of prayer in the photographer and in others. He raises the question: Can photography evoke the sense of prayer directly, or through symbol, or the combination of both?

White makes an attempt to establish a graduate program in photography, "Toward a Whole Photography," at MIT. The proposal is not accepted.

#### 1973

Indicating his life-long subscription to Ansel Adams's Zone System, White completes the "Visualization Manual," an elaboration of his *Exposure With the Zone System*, first published in 1956.

Following his interest in astrology, the artist, with Anna Crebo, outlines "The Astrological Dimension of Photography," a book that is never realized.

White gives a lecture, prepared with Jonathan Green, at the University of Massachusetts, Boston, addressing A. D. Coleman's published criticism of the exhibition "Octave of Prayer." White refutes Coleman's assertions that the exhibition is excessively spiritual and manipula-



tively curated and reaffirms the need for spiritual expression through photography. A dual article with Coleman is also published in *Camera* 35.

In the summer he speaks at a Friends of Photography workshop in Carmel. He visits Ansel Adams, Point Lobos, the Zen Center at Tassajara, and San Francisco.

In August he accepts an invitation to travel to Lima, Peru, for photographic teaching and personal photographing. Contact is made there with a Gurdjieff group. The following year he makes a trip to Peru expressly for Gurdjieff studies.

#### 1974

In January White visits Europe for the first time. The trip is sponsored by MIT and the American Academy in Rome for White with a group of students to photograph in Rome.

With Jonathan Green, White directs the exhibition "Celebrations" for the Hayden Gallery, MIT. The last of four large theme exhibitions, the aim of this one is to further extend the religious and esoteric aspects of photography that have been the focus of the previous three. The goal is to show in photographs the moment when spirit reveals itself in the celebrations of life, its rites and mysteries, and to try and position photography in the realm of the sacred rather than the secular. Also with Jonathan Green, he directs the exhibition "1000 Photographers, Doing Their Own Thing, 1974" in the Creative Photography Gallery at MIT.

Minor White retires from the faculty of MIT.

He is invited by Peter Bunnell, who is now on the faculty of Princeton University and director of The Art Museum, to give a one-day seminar at Princeton.

#### 1975

The *Jupiter Portfolio*, twelve black and white images dating between 1947 and 1971, the artist's first portfolio, is published in collaboration with the Light Gallery, New York.

White is appointed senior lecturer at MIT for one year and made Fellow of the Council for the Arts, MIT.

He relinquishes editorship of *Aperture* and is credited hereafter as founding editor. *Aperture* continues under the direction of Michael Hoffman.

White's stepmother dies.

His first substantial exhibition of photographs in Europe is circulated by the United States Information Agency, Paris.

White begins preparation of "Portfolio Chromatikos," a portfolio of twelve color prints that is never completed.

In November he travels to England to lecture at the Victoria and Albert Museum in conjunction with the exhibition "The Land" and to conduct classes at Trent Polytechnic, Nottingham, and the Derby College of Art and Technology. White meets the photographers Bill Brandt and Raymond Moore. He is interviewed by Paul Hill and Thomas Cooper for *Camera* magazine.

Traveling directly from England to the University of Arizona, Tucson, he participates in a symposium there. While at the university, White is interviewed and video taped by director Harold Jones for the Center for Creative Photography, one of only two such taped interviews of the artist. He returns to Boston from Arizona on December 1, having stopped briefly in Cleveland for a workshop. White suffers a heart attack later that day in Boston and is hospitalized for several weeks.

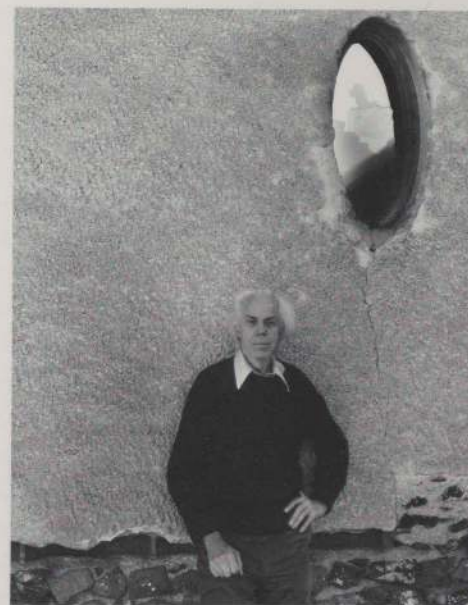
#### 1976

He devotes considerable time to reading such books as *The Wheel of Death*; *The Rainbow Book*; *Tibetan Book of the Dead*; *Death, Afterlife and Eschatology*; and texts by and about Gurdjieff. He photographs at this time only with a Polaroid SX-70. In March through early May he undertakes a series of situational portrait photographs of himself executed with Abe Frajndlich, a resident student, later published as *Lives I've Never Lived: A Portrait of Minor White*.

He is awarded an Honorary Doctorate of Fine Arts from the San Francisco Art Institute. The award is accepted for White by Walter Chappell.

At age sixty-eight Minor White dies from a second heart attack on June 24 in Massachusetts General Hospital. He bequeaths his personal photographic archives, papers, library, and collection of original photographs to Princeton University.

A private wake is conducted by a Gurdjieff group, the Boston Society for Experimental Studies, on June 25 in Arlington, and a graveside service at Mount Auburn Cemetery, Boston, is held the following day.



San Xavier Del Bac Mission, 1975  
Tucson, Arizona  
Photograph by Judy Dater



From *Lives I've Never Lived*, 1976  
Arlington  
Photograph by Abe Frajndlich







# INTRODUCTION

Minor White was one of the most important photographic artists active during the thirty years after World War II. Living during this period in San Francisco, then in Rochester, and finally near Boston, he produced a singular body of imagery that assures his place in the history of twentieth-century photography. His was a pictorial achievement that helped shape a distinctly modern American photographic style that is characterized by luminous clarity, lyricism, and grace.

White's achievement should be understood in relation to a number of other major photographers of earlier generations. At the start of his career it was Alfred Stieglitz and Edward Weston who exerted the most significant influence, and later, to a lesser extent, it was Ansel Adams and Paul Strand. When White is joined with these artists, the five of them make an interesting study of how photography developed in this country between the 1930s and the 1960s. Weston was the supreme formalist, both in his seeing and his use of the classical vocabulary of straightforward photography. Adams revealed within this idiom its larger expressive possibilities, and it was White who took the same idiom into the metaphoric realm. Weston made his last photographs in 1948, and while Adams continued to work actively for the next two decades, his primary vision had been revealed in his heroic works of the forties. It was White who, in the fifties, forged a new photographic approach; one that blended the hard formalism of western taste with the more subtle and intellectual stance of the east coast masters, Stieglitz and Strand. White was the perfect artist to execute this mix; a mid-westerner, educated in both science and poetry, he had first experienced photography as a quasi-documentary medium, and then developed a new conceptual understanding of it through his study of art history, aesthetics, and psychology.

In addition to the qualities that characterize his photographic style, Minor White was strongly representative of that group of artists who drew their primary subject matter from their personal experiences. Therefore, in approaching his work in this book, it is the biography of the artist, amplified with texts from his unpublished writings, that most informs the pictorial presentation. By

placing the highly detailed biographical chronology at the very beginning, the point is made that out of the life the photographs emerge, and in order to consider the works, even on their most basic level, one must first be familiar with the circumstances of White's life that brought them about. With such information as where he was working and when, what ideas were of interest to him and when, what were the overriding emotional issues and confrontations in his life, one gains the insight to analyze his pictures as more than the renderings of objects or the configuration of forms and tones spread across a sheet, and to see his images as the testimony of a daring artist intent upon communicating with others on a level of intense intimacy.

Following the chronology and introduction is a selection of White's unpublished writings: poetry, letters, and passages from his journal, "Memorable Fancies." Here the master-themes of White's life are revealed in his own words: patterns of hopes and illusions, preoccupations, fears, rhythmic movements of character discernible in the diurnal stream of existence, subtle designs of personality expressed as behavior. Chosen to show the vivacity of his writing and selected from the key times in his life to evoke when and how he was revealing these ideas, or expounding on them, this section is the literary, autobiographical companion to the pictorial one that follows in the portfolio of photographs.

The portfolio is not arranged chronologically but is cast in the form of a connected series of images dating between 1938 and 1975. It is composed of three sections, each of which renders the medium of photography in one of three modalities: possessive, observational, and revelatory. The pictures are frequently set up in pairs spanning several years, pointing out the remarkable continuity and consistency of White's personal iconography and his arresting formal mastery throughout nearly forty years of active photographing.

The portfolio is followed by the presentation of a complete, original sequence of photographs; one created by White himself, titled *Totemic Sequence*. It is published here for the first time. The sequence form, where photographs are not presented singly but are grouped together rather like what White called a "cinema of



stills," was his preferred method of presenting photographs.<sup>1</sup>

Finally, reverting back to the sharper order of what may be seen as a kind of life-writing, there is a presentation of one hundred images in precise chronological order covering White's entire career, from his early Pictorialist work done in the thirties in Portland to a last Polaroid SX-70 made in Arlington, Massachusetts, just weeks before his death. This survey enables the reader to detect White's evolving photographic conception, including his choices in subject matter and the formal pattern of his pictorial style. The images reproduced have been selected based on their originality and in relation to the artist's iconographic preoccupations during any one year or distinct period.

White's life had an integrated structure to it, a finely wrought architecture of creative energy that produced an interrelated body of work, from his pictorial achievement to his work as a teacher, editor, and critic. However, it is his photographic artistry that is emphasized here, and is given new meaning based on an extraordinary amount of material now available in White's personal archive, consisting of his journal, unpublished manuscripts, correspondence, files of negatives and proof prints, field notes, and a significant collection of finished prints.

As a young man White turned from writing poetry, which had at first preoccupied him, and took up photography intent on making it his preferred medium. Writing in 1937 he said, "In becoming a photographer I am only changing medium. The essential core of both verse and photography is poetry. And I have felt the taste of poetry."<sup>2</sup> Those who studied with White, or befriended him in other contexts, know he sought to explore his inner self and discoursed on it to an extraordinary degree. However, why he chose photography as his expressive outlet, a medium of powerful realism, is a mystery. It may have been photography's eloquent literalism that appealed to White; that in depicting a subject he could appropriate it, manage its meaning, and through his eye and the photographic process transform it into a new poetic reality of personal significance. Nothing pleased White more than to take on, and display in his work, the leap of insight that a metaphorical rendering of an otherwise real subject could impart. Indeed, the more ordinary the subject matter, the deeper and more inspiring it is White's poetic view of it.

The complications and the frequent contradictions in the life of an artist like Minor White are nearly impossible to sort out and

to profile. The task of bringing the factual data of his daily existence in line with the less tangible, psychological aspects can be overwhelming, if not presumptuous. Minor White felt no hesitation in casting a wide net in choosing the books he read, selecting the philosophies he embraced, the artists he admired, or the students and colleagues with whom he would share his inquiry. He took from each of his sources only that portion of the conception or method that he considered pertinent to his needs, and he felt free to manipulate and transform the ideas of others into the aesthetics and stylistic structure of his own work. At times one realizes that this was as much an unconscious process as a conscious or deliberate one, and above all, it is in White's pictorial artistry that one can see the evidence of this rapport and eclecticism. Even though White grew increasingly to express his belief in divine inspiration, he knew that he had to be ripe or in a state of awareness to receive any such blessing. He saw this state of ripeness as being "... caught in life,"<sup>3</sup> but he also said, "Spirit selects its own photographer. All we can do is to be open to Spirit."<sup>4</sup> He knew further that the techniques of photography were demanding and precise, and he pursued a rigorous, even passionate practice of the medium, commenting once that, "... prayer uses the same energies that creativeness and photographing [do]."<sup>5</sup>

An early, significant influence on White in the adoption of what must be seen as a psychoanalytic approach to photographic expression was the art historian Meyer Schapiro with whom White studied at Columbia University in 1945-46. It was at this time that White took his knowledge of writing and of the poetic form, which had been advanced earlier at the University of Minnesota by another influential professor and critic, Joseph Warren Beach, and applied it as the fundamental thesis of his pictorial work; that is, that photography was purposeful creative expression, and that the viewer should "read" the photograph as one would a work of literature. In his first theoretical writings, those begun in the mid-forties under Shapiro's influence and continuing into the early fifties, White transformed the system of stylistic analysis laid out in 1915 by Heinrich Wölfflin in his classic book *Principles of Art History* to create a contemporary, manual-like work. Finally completed in 1953, and incorporating much earlier material, White titled the manuscript "Fundamentals of Style in Photography." It was never published.<sup>6</sup> The text was, however, an important summation of White's ideas about the aesthetics of photography at that time.



These ideas served as the bases for his editorial structuring of the quarterly journal *Aperture*, which was just then beginning, and, especially, as the conceptual grounding for his own practice of photography.

"Fundamentals" was written for both photographer and viewer. On the one hand White provided the photographer with a vocabulary for use in a language of purposeful, comprehensible expression, and on the other he provided the viewer with a similar vocabulary for articulating the interpretation of such expressive works. White recognized that with such contemporary photographic art as his own, the viewer was required to be "literate," to possess a sophisticated blend of information regarding conventional symbolic representation with a precise formalist vocabulary, which White at first referred to as "space analysis," in order to decipher the full meaning of a metaphorical photograph. All of this is analogous to certain tenets of abstract surrealism and early abstract expressionism. White was a colleague of some of the most progressive painters of his day, those teaching with him at the California School of Fine Arts, and there is evidence that White knew about and understood the non-photographic associations and the painterly idioms that surrounded him as he was developing his aesthetics of photography. In specific terms, he knew that what he was calling for in his concept of a new photographic aesthetic was a rejection of the world of common, outward culture, which since the thirties had been the currency of photojournalism and documentary photography. In so doing White was redirecting photography to its roots in the principles of early Pictorialism.

Minor White was an artist of authentic sensibility. His ingenuity in demonstrating how to reach out to others with the expression of specific and deeply felt personal emotions was one of his contributions to modern photography. Like the work of his predecessor Alfred Stieglitz, it is the intensity of a primordial essence that emanates from White's pictures, that attracts us to them, and that maintains their presence. Pivotal in this achievement as an artist was his firm understanding of the difference between what he called "expressive" and "creative" photographs. The distinction had to do with universalizing and offering up personal experience outside of its solely private realm to a wide audience. White understood this notion of public and private imagery. He frequently used the properties of the mirror to help explain this concept, and in a letter written to a photographer after reviewing his portfolio

White wrote, "Your photographs are still mirrors of yourself. In other words your images are raw, the emotions naked. To present these to others they need appropriate clothes. These are private images not public ones. They are 'expressive' meaning a direct mirror of yourself rather than 'creative' meaning so converted as to affect others as mirrors of themselves."<sup>7</sup> He goes on to recommend to his correspondent a book that had become fundamental in his thinking, Richard Boleslavsky's *Acting: The First Six Lessons*. In it Boleslavsky discusses what White termed the, "... clothing of the naked emotions that is necessary to art."<sup>8</sup>

White was saying that autobiography, taken by itself, is of only limited interest. For even though the autobiographer enjoys an intimate knowledge of his subject, he gives us a special truth, one based on the living texture of a life, and maybe only on illusion. In art, what facts there are must be reshaped so that while retaining the intimacy or authenticity to experience, the feelings and individual circumstances are projected outward beyond the self-centeredness of a private memoir, and especially away from the special character of narcissism.

The intention of the artist is a critical point, especially when the visual character of a photograph is what might be described as "abstract" or, even further, an "equivalent," a form intrinsic to photography. Here the literal subject is but a springboard to the true meaning that is expressed by way of metaphor. The reading of such an image requires close scrutiny and a disciplined familiarity with the particularities of the photographer's vocabulary. The dictionary or what might be called the reference guide to this vocabulary is comprised of the welter of psychological-physical happenings of the artist's life, among other information. In "When Is Photography Creative?," his first published article written in 1940, White observed, "... [This] variety of creativeness can be thought of as trying to understand all the possible implications of a subject and then seeing if one implication might be similar enough to the idea retained in his mind [the photographer's] to illustrate it and make it visible. If we compare the two ways of being creative ... the first is accomplished by *photographing the subject itself in such a way that its character is revealed*; the second is accomplished by *choosing a subject to photograph which will illustrate an idea heretofore existing only in the mind of the photographer*."<sup>9</sup>

White had an abiding interest in the theater, beginning first as a high school student and continuing especially during the forties



and early fifties. He was fascinated by the actor, who must be at once the real and the imagined, one person and another, and have the ability to transform self-awareness into meaningful and convincing projection. For White this latter concept would find expression in his creation of commanding pictorial imagery and in the high expectations he placed on any photographer following him.<sup>10</sup> His equal concern for the making of the picture and for the viewer's grasp of its meaning—the end result of the process he called “reading”—is evident in all of White's photographic pronouncements. It is why he embraced the function of another person integral to the theater, that of the director. It is the director who exerts his presence over the production and who, having the broadest experience, manipulates the actor *and* the audience into a harmony of understanding.

There is considerable disagreement over the role that biography should play in the study of works of art. One point of view is that the work should be engaged alone. An opposing view is that biographical knowledge is critical to a fuller understanding of the work. Photography can be an extremely intentful medium, and most photographs are revealing of decisions and choices made by the photographer. These choices reflect the photographer's motives and desires, and, one must remember, have been deliberately disclosed by him. As with the maker himself, the viewer is capable of knowing about a work only to the degree his experience allows him. The specific experience is at the core of any interpretation and again reflects that contradiction between engagement and truth.

With a photographer like White, who moved progressively away from the closely depictive and naturalistic to the reductive and the abstract in imagery, knowledge of his personal philosophy and psychological state is fundamental to the interpretation of his personal symbolism. What is it that drove the artist to conclude his choices, to reveal himself in a particular way? In Minor White's case the focus of such an inquiry is less on the customary notion of pictorial artistic influence and more on the crucial aspects of personal emotional growth in such intimate, intertwined, and arcane areas as sexuality and spirituality. White had very little concern for personal success. He was ambitious, but he was disinterested in the contemporaneity of style. He was in this sense detached. These facts point us away from the usual critical methodology of pictorial comparison and move us into the arena of more speculative investigation at the core of which is the artist's perspective and his sense of tradition.

White's life, which entirely revolved around his professional activities, had an internal logic about it in which everything connected. In a temporal sense it can be divided into three major divisions: young adulthood in Portland; the California years between 1946 and 1953; and the Rochester and Boston period between 1953 and 1976. He believed that what he termed a “trajectory” started in 1946 when he first went to San Francisco, and it concluded with the 1959 showing at George Eastman House of his exhibition “Sequence 13 / Return to the Bud.” Manifestations of this period of learning appear in his photographs and also in the articles, editorials, and the general selection of pictorial images for *Aperture*.

In 1964 he wrote, “A second trajectory seems to have started in 1955 with the reading of the [Evelyn] Underhill [book] *Mysticism*. The ‘search’ actually started in the period in high school, when there was a wandering around among various churches, the entry into the Catholic Church during the war years. This one still continues.”<sup>11</sup> He went on to say, “The concept of the Equivalent first encountered in reading *America and Alfred Stieglitz* in 1939 or 1940 has been the basis of all my photography and teaching and much of the writing. The photograph as metaphor parallels the Taoist philosophy, ‘as in Heaven, so on earth,’ or in modern terms, ‘what we see is a mirror of ourselves.’”<sup>12</sup> He elaborated on this latter idea in his manuscript for the unpublished book “Canons of Camerawork,” in which he wrote, “When the photograph is a mirror of the man, and the man is a mirror of the world, then Spirit might take over.”<sup>13</sup>

The last ten years of White's life was a period of rich and varied complexion. If he felt a conclusion of sorts had been reached with a trajectory that ended in 1959 with the “Sequence 13” exhibition, he must certainly have felt that again, and even more profoundly, with the 1969 publication of his monograph *Mirrors Messages Manifestations* and with his exhibition at the Philadelphia Museum of Art early the following year. The publication of this major compendium clearly pleased him, but his euphoria was tempered by serious health concerns. As his condition signaled to him his mortality, one could sense a new quietness within him. It was during these years, in the early seventies, that many began to perceive him as more of a spiritual leader than an artistic one; and an atmosphere of cultism began to develop around him. Encouraging this perception was his physical presence, a frail body, topped by long white hair, and a monkish posture often in Zenlike repose.



He attracted a number of new students and admirers, who came from outside of photography and had different interests from those with whom he had been associated in previous years. However, as can be seen from the chronology, his activity in photography was still sharply directed and extensive. The four exhibitions he directed at MIT from 1968 to 1974, together with the accompanying publications, were clearly extensions of his earlier ideas and summations of them in new forms and replaced *Aperture* as the focus of his attention. His own photography had declined during the early part of this period but resumed dramatically in 1973, and he was active making pictures up until the time of his death.

Minor White lived his life through his photographs. His imagery reflects the odyssey of his personal history, and the viewer should feel comfortable in recognizing in White's work the "feel" of autobiography. For White, making and showing photographs was therapeutic, a form of release from the turmoil of experience and a way of working out for himself his deep-seated, and sometimes conflicting, interfused emotions. His devotion for photography was a kind of substitute for the intimacy he failed to achieve elsewhere, and in a sense it rounded him out, it completed him. While his sequences of photographs evolved progressively from the narrative form of a literal and temporal story to a more schematic structure, they remained nonetheless based on real knowledge; often they were created as the result of a painful interaction between people needing to experience love. The sequences grew out of the bonds between the subjects and the photographer that were intentionally used by the latter to illuminate the doubt and compassion that were revealed in his work and that he knew would endure there. Strongly related to the set form of poetry, both in terms of the demands placed on the individual image and on the ensemble, White, like Stieglitz, used the sequence form to extend the dialogue between images, and between the artist and his audience. As for the individual photograph, especially the portrait, this image also completed such a complex interaction between subject and photographer that for White it often achieved a vicarious kinship with the actual person or the emotional drama since passed.

The moments of intense emotion in White's life are always exposed, often in renderings that are luminous with the special beauty that only a carefully crafted photograph can embody. Thus his photographs should be looked at with the intentions of the photographer uppermost in the mind; that is, with an appreciation

of the facts that lie behind them. Only in this way, and by long, disciplined scrutiny of a picture, can one arrive at its meaning. Just as certain incidents ingrain themselves with writers, or otherwise make an impression on them, picture makers too have obsessions. In February of 1947, White recorded in his journal a kind of credo. He wrote, "That thru consciousness of one's self one grasps the means to express oneself. Understand only yourself. The camera is first a means of self-discovery and then a means of self-growth. The artist has one thing to say—himself. . . . The camera and its emphasis on the technique of observation will broaden him, deepen him immeasurably."<sup>14</sup>

A good part of White's understanding of the concept of self derived first from his knowledge of Christian mysticism and later from his involvement with the Gurdjieff philosophy. In these teachings much is said about using human suffering in order to purify oneself and to achieve union with God. However, very early in his life White had already felt the mental strain over his homosexuality, and he knew that a significant portion of the content of his work would emerge from the emotion of his psychological unease and frustration. Writing in "Memorable Fancies" in the early thirties he remarked, "After reading T. S. Eliot's *Wasteland*, I perceived that if one could put out the energy to produce a banquet of frustration, then frustration had power. It was worth pursuing."<sup>15</sup> And later, in 1960, he wrote, again quoting Eliot, "Salvation is to make the most of the mess we are born into."<sup>16</sup> His own particular condition is at the center of his expressive work and is central in the approach he took to his photography; it is the source of his fusing the personal with the universal. Through this psychic energy he felt the possibilities of uniting with God, which, like the monastic supplicant he aspired to be, he attempted to do while remaining in this world.

In a letter written in 1962 he said, ". . . understand that the real and imaginary suffering both can be put to work. Maybe you can grasp the concept that the imaginary suffering is to be let go of, and the real used as a constant reminder of the emptiness of yourself, and a further reminder that the emptiness must be fulfilled. But filled with what? Not with a new life which repeats, with more pleasant variations, and again leads to an emptiness; but a worth the effort inner core. . . . if you stop identifying with the imaginary suffering, and use the real suffering to show you man's basic emptiness in yourself, you can make efforts toward filling the gap . . ."<sup>17</sup> White's search for spiritual truth was his effort to fill this



gap for himself and complete the circle of his existence. This lofty aspect of White's character should not, however, blind one from the gemlike lucidity that was radiant within him or the lightheartedness and humor and deep wisdom that he imparted to others.

White's sexuality underlies the whole of the autobiographical statement contained in his work. In the earliest pictures and sequences, and to the end of his life, he struggled with a sense of guilt. In "Memorable Fancies" he wrote, "Those who are perceptive enough to read the meaning at the heart of my photographs will probably be sympathetic enough to forgive me."<sup>18</sup> White was sexually active throughout his life, and in particular during the years before the war and when he was in San Francisco, but if this physical side was even partially fulfilled, he nonetheless struggled with repression and fear. Throughout his life he felt a deep loneliness, and he recognized he would connect with others mostly through the mutual testimony of feelings, as part of the community of discerning witnesses. His homosexuality caused him to live outside of those kinds of family relationships that usually provide the central focus to one's life. But his circumstance did force him to consider different realities, those existing simultaneously, but no less true and no less significant.

It was to society at large that White addressed his work and from which he hoped to receive an indisputable gift of respect and perhaps pass on a legacy. Others had used art as a means to achieve these goals. White had his photography, and he once wrote, "If it weren't for my own photographs I would give up photography";<sup>19</sup> teaching relieved his loneliness because for him it became a form of parenthood. In teaching, to be in such proximity to the young was both a joy and strain on White. The feelings for and from his students satisfied his desire for affection, and he developed the means of transforming the act of photographing people, notably young men, into an ecstatic experience of a sort. He was very aware of the centers of mind and body, or more pertinently, the conflicts of the spirit and the flesh. He once observed, "Contemplation of the deity in all its manifestations is the true work of the soul. The work of the body is to provide first, the means to keep alive, and second, the means to see all manifestations."<sup>20</sup> The degree to which he blended mind and body through the practice of his art can be recognized in this declaration: "Photography is the whole of life for those who need it."<sup>21</sup> About the relation of two people in the act of making a photograph he wrote, "With only a camera be-

tween a person and myself, with only a camera between us, I can reach out to one person at a time. That is almost more than I can do. But I can do something: direct, encourage, generate an ambiance in which he feels free to be himself or to be a friend. Then the best of him rises in his face or his hands or his body and is reflected in the lens. While talking, I tell them about themselves. Because there is only a camera between us, they listen, they take my suggestions for their growth. I have learned to care for what I say."<sup>22</sup>

White made a determined effort to continuously manage and manipulate but also to use these highly charged and personalized encounters. Evidence of his reactions under the sway of the resulting, sometimes painful, emotions may be seen in how he treated the homoerotic content of his work and in his writings, in sequences, such as *The Temptation of Saint Anthony Is Mirrors, Fourth, Seventeen, Steely the Barb of Infinity*, and others, as well as in his poetry and his journal entries in which he records both his actual experiences and his reflections on the nature of his existence. While on the one side White sought the revelation of self, and clearly manifested his presence in his work, he concealed much about himself in his spoken dialogue concerning his pictures. In most cases he almost always turned an inquiry away from himself and toward others in an effort to foster their self-awareness and to encourage their growth. Interviews with his friends and former students show that each person knew practically nothing factual about White's background; that their experience of him was relegated to direct, personal observation. White's emphasis on having viewers "read" photographs and talk about photographs in terms of their own lives may be seen not only as a pedagogic device but as a technique of deflecting what could become a too personal inquiry about himself and thus reduced the complexities of his transacting with others.

Minor White understood the photographic process to be composed of an evolution of three phases in which creativity, growth, and vision can be practiced. In 1967 he wrote, "First, a period of image isolation during which the photographer responding as a human being makes contact with the subject. Second, the production phase in which the photographer functions as a craftsman translating subjects into feeling and feelings into images. Third, the period when the photographer shows his image to other people. The last phase is especially fruitful because growth for both



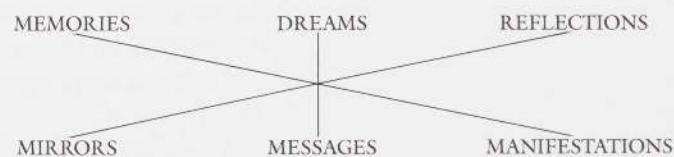
the photographer and members of his audience may be extended and magnified."<sup>23</sup> In this projection of the self outward, one notion is implicit, and White formulated it in a statement or canon, as he called it. He wrote, "Nourish the viewer with images as you have been vivified by resonance with the subject."<sup>24</sup>

Expanding further on this idea, White wrote:

In my case, photographic production has always been intricately mixed with teaching and writing. Students have in a sense made many of the images I would have made, had I not taught. Consequently, the personal photography has remained an exploration of inner feeling states. The result is an anatomy of one man's inner growth.

Briefly, the structure of that anatomy can be stated in four phases: photographing things for what they are; photographing the same things for what else they are; photographing for the sake of an increased awareness of Spirit; and, at present, photographing to be reminded of enlightenment.<sup>25</sup>

The title of White's book, *Mirrors Messages Manifestations*, the only publication of his work to appear during his lifetime, provides an interesting study that may further illuminate his ideas about personal photography. The title can be read as a cryptogram created by White to signify his philosophy of photographing as the mirror reflection of self, how the photographer is the receptor and carrier of special messages, and how the photograph can be a revelatory manifestation for others. It is possible that White may have conceived his title as a homage to Carl Jung, and that it is an anagram based on the title of Jung's autobiography, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*.<sup>26</sup> Graphically represented, the linkages between them may be seen as follows:



We know that White read Jung over many years, and a copy of Jung's autobiography is in the artist's library. In an entry in "Memorable Fancies" in 1961, the year Jung's book was published, White wrote, "The photographs in a sequence or constellation may be compared to dance on a theme. The major point or points of the whole are stated and restated with variations until the very last member of the audience has encountered it or them. Likewise the

sequence must be long enough, either in number of photographs or time of study, to sustain the viewer until he has directly experienced the inner 'meaning' or 'message' or 'manifestation' or Being. The viewer who is willing to bring his heart, mind, viscera and intuition to play upon a sequence will reach an understanding."<sup>27</sup>

In every respect *Mirrors Messages Manifestations* is an artist's book; it is also White's autobiography. Coming after the onset of serious illness, he felt a sense of completeness to his life when the book was published. His friend Barbara Morgan reported at the time that White was very happy about the book and that he felt he had finished the primary goal of his life in publishing it.<sup>28</sup> In it, in addition to many quotations from his journal, there is a lengthy biographical chronology. About this information he wrote a rare comment that revealed the pride in his accomplishment of some thirty years, "It's grand to have all this stuff together for the first time. . . . I can't say how amazed I am [at] how well it reads, and gratified to say the least. . . . I suppose the observations that you make have been noticed before, but not in print. And it was only a few years ago that I would admit to myself that I was talented—how curious—but it's part of the make up."<sup>29</sup>

White left his journal, "Memorable Fancies," intact and did not destroy it at the end of his life, which indicates the significance he gave to it. He knew that it would be a part of his literary legacy. He had personal familiarity with Edward Weston's journal, "The Daybooks," and was aware of the several plans to publish it, including the significant effort expended by his close friend Nancy Newhall, which led to Weston's editing many entries. White never took such an action, and this, together with his bequest of the document, indicates his faith in the nature of autobiography and probably his realization that the work would someday be published.

*Minor White: The Eye That Shapes* is an investigative, retrospective view of Minor White. In exploring the theme that White termed "camera as a way of life,"<sup>30</sup> and in elaborating on the richness and diversity of his photographic endeavor, this publication presents, thirteen years after his death, an affectionate and affirmative view of the man and the artist. An effort has been made to reveal in depth the inner workings of his existence and the features of his photography that are perhaps indistinct for many people, including those familiar with *Mirrors Messages Manifestations*, a complicated sequence of words and images that was White's own presentation of his life and, as has been said, was an autobiography



with its own special truth. This publication is a documented and more thorough interpretation, presented in an evolutionary way, beginning with an analysis of his earliest creative endeavors through to the last. From the extensive biography, the highly introspective selections from his journal, and the discussion of his sexuality, to the lesser known photographs that White had set aside over the years, every effort has been made to bring the reader closer to the intimate reality of this man.

As stated at the beginning of this essay, White, together with his work, should be seen in the company of Stieglitz, Adams, Weston, and Strand; indeed, with others of his own generation, such as Aaron Siskind and Frederick Sommer. The character of their work and their shared philosophies make this true. But ultimately White stands apart from all these men. This is so because of the individual style that he achieved in his work through his technical and formal mastery, but more importantly, it is because of his commitment, revealed in his own way, to the spiritual and to the sacred in art.

Although the number of artists in photography who have followed White's direction are few, many others who know of him and his photographs have continued to pursue his belief that "seeing" is both external and internal. White shaped his photographs by seeing and feeling. The eye that sees also shapes is an idea similar to that expressed by the thirteenth-century German mystic Meister Eckhart, which White was fond of quoting: "... the eye with which I see God is the same eye with which God sees me."<sup>31</sup> The pursuit and perhaps mastery of this understanding, whether or not one aspires to make pictures, is reason enough to study the life and work of Minor White.

#### NOTES

1. This phrase is from the introduction to the 1950 *Fourth Sequence* and is one of White's clearest and most insightful on the nature of the sequence form. It is reprinted in *Mirrors Messages Manifestations* (New York: Aperture, Inc., 1969), 63.
2. "Memorable Fancies," 1937.
3. Letter to Ansel Adams, May 17, 1964.
4. Letter to Gerald Robinson, September 4, 1964.
5. "Memorable Fancies," 1942.
6. While we can recognize the innovation in White's theories today, his writing about photography was for the most part rejected by his contemporaries in the late forties and early fifties. He tried repeatedly without success to have the various drafts of "Fundamentals" published, but all he managed for his efforts over several years was the publication in 1951 of four articles in *American Photography* (two additional articles were announced but never published).
7. Letter to a photographer, November 1, 1962.

8. Ibid.
9. Minor White, "When Is Photography Creative?," *American Photography* 37 (1943):17. Italics in original.
10. He gives eloquent expression to these expectations in a letter of 1951 to two of his former students, Tom and Audrey Murphy, and in the 1962 letter to an anonymous photographer, both of which are reprinted in the section of Unpublished Writings.
11. Minor White, "Chronology with Comments, Brief," 1964, 8.
12. Ibid.
13. Minor White, "Canons of Camerawork: Résumé of MSS," 1964, 1.
14. "Memorable Fancies," February 11, 1947.
15. "Memorable Fancies," 1932-37.
16. *Mirrors Messages Manifestations*, 190, from "Memorable Fancies," April 1960.
17. Letter to Gerald Robinson, February 10, 1962.
18. "Memorable Fancies," 1948-49.
19. Ibid, July 18, 1953.
20. Ibid, February 5, 1934.
21. Ibid, March 8, 1947.
22. *Mirrors Messages Manifestations*, 164, from "Memorable Fancies," October 1962.
23. *Vision and the Man Behind the Camera* (Cambridge, Mass.: Project, Inc., 1967), n.p.
24. Ibid.
25. Minor White, "Brief Account of Career as Exhibition Photographer," 1967, n.p.
26. For assistance with the development of this idea I would like to thank Martha Strawn and William Smith.
27. "Memorable Fancies," 1961.
28. Telephone conversation between Barbara Morgan and author, January 18, 1970.
29. Letter to Peter Bunnell, July 26, 1969.
30. "Memorable Fancies," December 3, 1951.
31. *Camera* 38 (1959):6, from "Memorable Fancies," October 20, 1958.



# UNPUBLISHED WRITINGS

This group of Minor White's unpublished writings includes examples of his early poetry, selections from his correspondence between 1943 and 1976, and excerpts from entries in his journal, "Memorable Fancies," between 1950 and 1970.\* The writings provide the reader with reflections on White's deepest personal concerns and on his relations with friends and former students. They are also examples of the dialogues on aesthetics that he conducted with colleagues. The selections, which are arranged in chronological order and date from the time when the artist's ideas were his most current interest, have been chosen also for their quality and substance.\*\* They should be read as an autobiographical narrative.

\*Only one letter and a few short quotations from "Memorable Fancies" have been previously published.

\*\*For clarity, some grammatical changes have been made and spelling errors have been corrected; deletions are indicated by ellipses. One piece, the concluding statement to the writer Tama Hughes, has been placed out of sequence for reasons of content.

## *Poem 56 from an unidentified set*

August 22, 1936  
Minneapolis

There's more of this than closely hewed  
And line up words and rhymes can mutter,  
And more than language is imbued  
With small authority to utter.  
Let us turn to simpler words  
And thoughts of things we think to be,  
And may assume, like flight of birds  
That wings find more than eyes can see.

## *Unidentified poem*

September 24, 1936  
Minneapolis

The mind delivers ultimatums  
Stern phrases, and promises bold  
To be true to the inner man,  
To the self inimitable,  
To lead the better life, they do not hold.

The mind delivers ultimatums  
Without respect to either  
The soulful nor the physical.

## *Letter to Isabel Kane*

July-August 1943  
At sea

My Dear:

... Some soldier stopped a moment and spoke. "It's indescribably rich in the dark, isn't it?" Without waiting for an answer he continued, a little unlike a soldier. "This soft mist, the dark outlines of the boats in the convoy make it seem as if the long strong limbs of my woman are what cause the rhythmic heaving of this bloody ship. And the wind is like her hair in my face. And the foam and blue-green glints of light are like her fleeting expressions of smile and seduction. Can you see that faint red gleam on the water like flesh in the moonlight is red from your memory of flesh?"

I could not, so I laid his faulty vision to the hot red blood of him who spoke. He must have been full of the dreams the endless ocean engenders to talk so freely and so expressively of his feelings, instead of using the vulgar language we usually use to hide the tenderness of our passion. I had been dreaming of love myself, I guess, though you were not consciously in my thoughts. The night was too misty, mysterious to be one of yours. It is the clear, sparkling jeweled nights and days that are yours; those times when mystery is so cunningly hidden in the apparent clarity, it is more absolute, more unresolved than any other.

The soldier rubbed his hand briskly across my close-cropped head and whispered, "It feels good—like a brush." He laughed quietly and went on his way to the black deck below, though maybe he wanted to stay—I don't know and like it better not knowing. His stopping had the effect of twisting the revolving river of my thought further backward than ever on myself.

On liberty once I met a sailor at a bar whose frank little eyes made him look like a son of ours might look someday. That alone was enough to tug mightily at my very weakest spot. Then when our talk turned quickly to books, music, art, and photography, and we found that the same things roused us, I was helpless. He entered that deep down place where I live



and before long had stirred there the memory of an old, old, love, one even longer ago than yours; that of a golden lad who used to sit in my window at the end of day when the feathered clouds turned to wings of gold and rose in a throaty, blue green sky. And he would read to me from those self-same books, or show me a Raphael [?] he had become enamored of, or fill the room with the sound of Brahms, or tempt me with splendid pictures of the mountains he had climbed in the glittering Rockies. Yes, the image the sailor let loose was greater by far than the man himself.

When he had gone, quickly, like the spray on your face which leaves the taste of salt, I found that sorrow and lonesomeness threatened me. It was only by praying to Our Lady that he, and the lad of long ago, be lead to Christ as I had been, that I could remember him kindly. In prayer the bitterness of finding and losing all in a few hours disappeared again like the foam below.

The soldier's hand on my shorn head set going other thoughts, one of which I could not dispose of by simply forgetting. I began to notice also a red glint on the water like the red we remember of flesh in the dark. There is much of unallayed lust among men without women, that fine bodies in close proximity and lads with limbs as smooth as a woman's does nothing to lessen. Already has started that process of separating love from desire in us. There will come the time when the degradation of our bodies by pain, hunger, privations, and annoyances, will be so great that our minds will stand aside like a disembodied thing obedient only to its own ideals, rather than acknowledge the beastly thing it lives in. Our bodies will go on slaking their desires, not of love but of disgust in the bowels of one another. And it will be unimportant. Some will seem thus to punish the body for being subject to so much pain. . . .

With deepest affection,  
Minor

Isabel Kane (1910–1987). Friend and source of religious inspiration from 1940 in LaGrande, Oregon. Marries James Bradley in 1946.

*Draft poem for the set "Elegies"*

late 1943  
Rockhampton, Australia

Give me, oh Lord one quarter hour  
With my loved one in my arms.  
But lightly held  
The dark kept him from seeing the love  
That shown in my eyes  
And while I wanted to sweep him up in a kiss

I blessed you, my Lord  
That I did not  
That I gladly did not  
And that the dark kept him from seeing how much I loved him.

*"Mass at Decimal Ridge"*

late 1944  
Leyte, Philippines

Strip everything a man has from a man  
His clothes, his decency  
His belief in any rights  
His food  
And there is left less than a man without skin,  
The substance of the bones is broken  
The spirit on the limb is lynched.

Expedient the mass beneath a monstrous leaf  
The chapel walls are rifles  
Its roof is a ring of bare bowed heads.  
Stripped the feast is barely laid  
Till the breath of him is spoken  
And heard is the sense of Him.

His presence stripped and simply there  
Repeats a miracle, repeated bare.

*Letter to Alfred Stieglitz*

July 7, 1946  
San Francisco

Dear Mr. Stieglitz:  
Thanks once more for allowing me to see your photographs. I am very sorry that illness prevented me coming to see you again before leaving New York so that I might have expressed in person my appreciation for the talks you gave me. If, as you once said, I understand the spirit of your work and approach to the subject, all is well. At any rate whatever and however I understand your work and your philosophy it will have to suffice.

I start teaching at Ansel's [Adams] school [California School of Fine Arts] in the Fall term the last of August. Meanwhile I am getting a few days teaching in to help Ansel when he is busy with other things. I have not taught photography for five years so that my first class the other night



was a delicious experience. There is much to say now that I never knew before. And it is interesting to watch and listen to the questions of the ex-servicemen in the class as they ask about Mr. Stieglitz. And I am pretty darned happy to be able to give them first-hand knowledge of your kind of photography.

The first long talk I had with you last January or thereabouts was the first contact I had with a man who had faith in anything anymore. That did me more good than you will ever realize. Somewhere in combat faith in anything but evil disappeared and it was slow returning. I hope I can extend to these students your faith that photography is the most important thing in the world as well as that more encompassing faith in integrity.

Ansel sends his best wishes as do I.

Sincerely yours,  
Minor White

Alfred Stieglitz (1864–1946). American photographer and gallery director.

*Letter to Ansel Adams*

March 8, 1947  
San Francisco

Dear Ansel:

... There are other causes for the general decline and feeling of depression [on the part of the students], and I feel that these are the real reasons, and that the overt expression of missing you is a certain avoidance of what is actually troubling some. In the first two assignments I was very hard on everyone—probably too much so. For instance told [C.] Freehe that his commercial work was up to professional level and that he ought to concentrate on the expressive side. That upset him no end. And so on. So the first cause of depression, then, is severe criticism of their photos. The second cause is still deeper, and not entirely clear to me. (So pardon the circumlocution). My own personal trend of thinking has been towards psychological analysis of photographs. Carrying out the theme that the photo reveals as much or more of the person than what he photographs to its logical conclusion, leads to analysis of inner person as shown by the things chosen to photograph. As far as most of the class is concerned this phase started during a lecture on the creative condition in which I said that the basis of a man's art was his soul, his heart, or his genitals, and I did not care which he called it, once they were all the same thing. (You should have seen Eliot [Finkels] squirm—delightful).

This statement was made prior to the Steam Plant pix. Consequently many photos were made (including mine) which were obvious statements of sex symbols. There have been many reactions to this statement and its

continuation, from prudishness and distrust (both of which have turned into strong opposition), thru the delight of the more virile or bawdy elements in class in a kind of licentiousness, to the profound concern of the more expressive elements in class. Rose [Mandel] in this respect has been very helpful, she knows a great deal about psychology, is not afraid of revealing her own thoughts via the photograph, and is a keen diagnostician of other people's photos (I owe much to her sensitivity and information).

From the reactions expressed it has been possible to separate the sheep from the goats as well as the ones who have something to say from those who will be good commercial men and nothing more. The strong ones are appearing in all their strength. To some of the objectors, who ask if it is necessary to reveal themselves all the time they photograph, I have been saying that an artist has only one subject—himself. If that is great, then his poetry or his photos are great. Naturally this answer caused another question; but what if I am not a great person. I countered that one with a statement of which I am not yet certain; namely, that thru photography, thru observation, thru sympathetic observation of things in the world, a man can become greatly broadened in himself if not actually great.

For awhile I used the above argument to resolve the conflicts that arose in individuals when confronted with self revelation. It is too abstract a concept for consumption for all but a few—and probably contains a germ of untruth also. Recently another resolution presented itself. Happened upon it when looking at Edward's [Weston] photos the other night. Was impressed with the fact that I was finding something else in his work than the sex symbols that usually impressed me—they seemed to have disappeared and a tremendous feeling of eternal things was present—a feeling of humility before God. It occurred to me that I was not stopping short of the sex symbols present in the pix, but going beyond. That is, if an analysis of the objects in his photos were carried thru by the method of association, they would all terminate in sex or some infantilism of some kind. This is the logical termination, and while it is possible to stop a chain association reaction anywhere along the line, doing so is a block to comprehension. So it is necessary to continue the association beyond the usual termination to He who is the creator of sex if an aesthetic appreciation or feeling is to result.

This is not very clearly stated I fear, and I resorted to some obvious analogies, hope you understand. . . .

Love and kisses  
[unsigned carbon copy]

Ansel Adams (1902–1984). American photographer and teaching colleague at the California School of Fine Arts. Close friend of the artist.



*Letter to Dwain Faubion*

*April 11, 1948  
San Francisco*

Dear Dwain:

... It is pointless to philosophize over words, I use them frequently enough to mistrust them sufficiently. When I talk I only describe visual images in my mind, so I am well aware of the inadequacy of the translations.

Several years ago I said to myself or wrote on a piece of paper somewhere that camera could lead a person into the world. I put out the idea that some photographers took to the camera for that reason. Perhaps I did. If so, I was conscious of my own inward turning. Since then I have used the camera to explore the inner man to greater and greater depths. For all my taking the camera to reach the world, it seems that I had to explore myself first. From your comment and from others I am extraordinarily aware of the need to turn the lens outward. Whether I can or not remains to be seen.

You were quite right in saying that the feeling you found in the two [photographs] extends to everything of late. And it has been somewhat of a surprise (and disappointment) to me to discover that a quiet desperation is all of my inner life. It is the creative urge and the destructive one together.

We create out of conflict apparently. So the above despair is from conflict unresolved and seemingly to remain so. But it is my belief that conflict should be the source but not the subject of pictures. So if the desperation is the source of production it ought not be the feeling that comes thru. I recall in class differentiating between "expressive" and "creative," the former relates to pictures coming from the individual for himself; the second a reasonably conscious effort to make pictures for others. My next step, then, is to produce creatively. ...

Sincerely,  
[unsigned carbon copy]

Dwain Faubion. Former student at the California School of Fine Arts whose photographs and writings are published in *Aperture*.

*Letter to Nancy Newhall*

*July 19-25, 1948  
San Francisco*

Dear Nancy:

A note before breakfast and off to class. I think that I am looking better than pic in *U.S. Camera* article. At least feel better—the two weeks between sessions was worth it.

We see Edward [Weston] starting the 25th of July. Will try and see Day Book. I have a suspicion that not including some of the other things than photography will be to the detriment of the latter when it comes to relating man to work. [Of] course some don't think that is important—but it is such scholarly gossip.

Will have to take time to explain my concept of the sequence one of these days. But briefly think that one picture should lead to the next with climaxes of impact rather than a string of individual masterpieces. The self-contained achievement of the latter practically destroys continuity. Consequently some lesser individual pictures are needed to build up towards the most powerful, and the most powerful need to appear at the proper place. It seems that an intelligent use of open form (Wölfflin) can help plenty in getting flow from one to the next.

Gotta scram—love to all.  
Minor

Nancy Newhall (1908–1974). Writer on photography and photographers, especially Adams, Stieglitz, and Weston. Close friend of the artist.

*"Memorable Fancies"*

*April 2, 1950  
San Francisco*

(Material proposed for the foreword of the Fourth Sequence)

... A SEQUENCE of photographs is like a cinema of stills. A cinema arrested at the high points and which lock the story to the memory. Each image is economical because of what has led to it and what it leads into. Each contains the thrust of forward movement as well as the foundation of what has happened. The gaps between pictures are as important as the images, tho they have to be filled by the reader from what he can grasp of the intentions of the artist, the implications of the subject, the implications of the treatment.

ABSTRACTION in photography is to reach towards the non-objective without ever breaking camera's strongest point—the magic of its tether to visual reality.

*"Memorable Fancies"*

*April 20, 1950  
San Francisco*

(Proposed for 4th Sequence)

This unwinged gull

dismembered

living

disassembled



in my heart  
not more wingless  
than my voice  
falling  
crashing heedless  
in the feathers of the wind.

*Letter to Beaumont and Nancy Newhall*

May 25, 1950  
San Francisco

Dear Beau and Nancy:

Enclosed is the usual Spring dither on what we are teaching. It always amazes me to discover how much we expect to lay before the kids. Fortunately much of it is not presented directly, but forms the basis of criticism and discussion over prints and over hootch.

... One of the values of teaching, to me, is now and then having to be what I am expected to be. The other day had a letter from a third year man (Phil Hyde—and he really has something to give to the world), [which] put me on the spot. Is art to be a reflection of the hopelessness of the present day man or is it to be one of the solid things which he can hang on to. Whew! It came up over my Disaster Series which he felt was a powerful ride straight to destruction and that it was devastating because it did not offer even the faintest possibility of salvation. Soooo, at lecture Monday I had to go on record saying that for me, art was one of the faiths of the world. That jarred a few of the boys, but it vindicated this one man—not that he really needed it—it's his conviction anyway—but perhaps it would cement for him his belief and thus save him years of proving to himself that he was right. It is not often that I have to take a stand, trying to be four teachers at once, I can usually state that facts 1, 2, 3, 4, etc., are facts objectively. If I had other teachers who stood for one view or another I could afford to take one myself. But it is worth it. I grow up in that class because in order to answer their questions I am forced to. It was a wonderful lift to make that positive statement, art is a communication of ecstasy, it is one of the faiths of man. For all my photographing the lonely, the frustrated, the despair, it is my belief that my aim with art is the solution of these things within the work of art. Came home that evening about 8, tired and feeling free more than usual. A shot and Bach fugues and I was off on a binge of sheer lyricism. . . .

Cheerio,  
Minor

Beaumont Newhall. Historian of photography, museum curator and director. Husband of Nancy Newhall. Friend and professional colleague of the artist.

*"Memorable Fancies"*

May 28, 1950  
San Francisco

Excerpts from letter to Isabel [Kane] Bradley:

... The close touch of spirit that came from the barest description of it was stronger than the heaped up ritual [the Mass] can ever convey to me. In fact the ritual is perfectly successful in obscuring the touch with God which I can have by merely looking at the sky or setting a prayer in motion.

There are some words from Goethe that apply, they go something like this; if a man has neither art nor science he had better have religion. Being a 20th century product I can not believe these statements as dogmatically as they sound. I can not say I have art so do not need religion, because in my own mind the importance of both to the individual is nearly the same thing—I suspect Goethe meant likewise.

Then too if my life as I go is not its own reward then essential integrity is lost. There is something in me that resents being a good boy now so that I can go to heaven.

There are moments and hours when the activity of photographing is out of my hands, when I act in the power of an outside force. So I do not believe that I have lost contact with the essential vision tho I remain blind. Sometimes these moments can be explained in psychological terms, when various conflicts take over the means of expression and relieve themselves—at other times it may be ecstasy.

Of student and my own photographs that I see have been taken with a minimum of conscious control, usually the ugliness, the sickness of the inner man becomes visible—no matter how much artistry has strengthened and beautified the work (This may represent a turning point in my thinking—or a restatement of a conviction that has been obscured). One must work with the student (or self) to help the inner man become as beautiful as his artistry—as strong and as sure. The possibility that in reducing the inner conflict to a state of salvation the drive to express the conflict will disappear and the man as artist will cease to exist.

However, using the word "salvation" here probably precludes the cessation of creative activity, since it can then be turned to the hard work of communication of ecstasy. OK. So we come out with art to the glory of God again (Excuse my thinking sketchily on paper).

Last week at a departmental lecture I went on record that art is a communication of ecstasy (an old phrase I learned from you). And ecstasy is bedded in the personality, so that self understanding and revelation of self is the raw material of art. Returning home that evening both late and tired, a Bach fugue, a shot of hootch, a new moon and spontaneously there rose to my lips the Rosary prayers for the insight of the day.

When these moments come spontaneously they are right. Forced as they are in continual Masses they become (to me) the burden of blindness.



*"Memorable Fancies" [Letter to Nancy Newhall]*

April 29, 1951  
San Francisco

Dear Nancy

... Then we stopped at Lobos (a new student, Stan Zrnich). At Gallery Cove the sand covered a certain spot I have been waiting and hoping would be cleared by the storm waves—hopelessly buried. And another rock in the same cove has been moved from isolation into a group of three. One of my favorite rocks that I have been waiting to rephotograph in all its splendid isolation. The symbols swept into my eyes as the waves raced into [t]he coves. The symbols have no existence outside of my blood, but the burying sand, the disrupted rock, the violent waves made into things, I could see with my own eyes that something has closed in my life. That which I have photographed at Lobos I need not photograph again, if indeed I could. I do not know what is in store, with the old Lobos closed a new one opened, sea laced with snow, rocks laced with fine crevices, a netting, a new revelation. I do not know what I will photograph there next time—but where I have been aware of its withdrawing, of closing, of dying, as Edward becomes more wraith-like. It now looked pristine as Spring. Will it reveal my own inner visions? Perhaps the responsibility Edward passed on to me was Lobos? ...

Love  
Minor

*Letter to Tom and Audrey Murphy*

October 18, 1951  
San Francisco

Dear Tom and Audry [sic]:

... But look people photography is a way of life, not a Sunday afternoon pastime.

It's got to be in the heart, the souls, the blood, the eyes and life of a man. It's the only medium that can be all these things in a roaring, wild, voluptuous manner, complete, total, all encompassing. Cripes there are people, who hate, live, die, live, what of these things?

I love you two characters and these pictures make me love you even more. So I scold. What you show me is good. I want more more, forever more, till your pictures are of the world, love of each other, love of everybody.

What if you have to break your heart to do it? It's oh what I expect. Too hard a demander I am. But it's what I demand of myself. Can I ask less of you?

[unsigned carbon copy]

Tom Murphy and Audrey Maloney Murphy. Husband and wife, photographers, and former students at the California School of Fine Arts.

*Letter to Nancy Newhall*

January 11, 1952  
San Francisco

Dear Nancy.

On January 9, 1952, Dody Warren, Ansel Adams, Minor White, Ernest Louie, Melton Ferris met with Mr. Stuart Dole, lawyer, to discuss a proposed journal of photographic aesthetics and opinion. Nancy Newhall and Dorothea Lange were not present; the latter sent her full accord with whatever decisions might be made.

After considerable discussion, agreement was reached on the following points; that the journal should be a nonprofit quarterly publication, titled "Photographer" (pending clearance of the title from the U.S. Patent Office). It should include feature articles, reviews, comments such as letters, quotes, and so on. The magazine would be paper covered, probably 32 pages in length and a 6 x 9 inch format. Minor White to be in full charge until such time as he felt growing size might demand some other form of organization. The other members subscribed wholeheartedly to the aim of the magazine as set forth by Minor White. (Definitive articles on aesthetics, philosophy, the generating principles of the medium—see enclosed policy or "manifesto" for details). They offered their cooperation in such matters as contribution of articles, photographs, design. It was further agreed that PHOTOGRAPHER should depend almost solely on subscription for its existence, and that much advertising as there might discreetly be, would not be of a strictly commercial nature. A tentative price was suggested at \$1.00 per issue and \$4.00 per year.

The question of financial liabilities of the participants was discussed with Mr. Dole, since funds would be solicited through the mails. The question of legal partners was discarded, the alternates such as nonprofit corporations was discarded. Under Mr. Dole's advice it was agreed that for the present Minor White should have sole charge and responsibility until a time came for his own protection another form of organization would be feasible.

It was accepted that only when finances permitted would there be pay for contributors; but the group felt that Minor White should keep a record of his time from the outset so that in the eventuality of sufficient funds his time and efforts as editor-publisher should be remunerated, other members receiving fees for specific contributions of articles, photographs, layout and cover design, dummy preparations and so on.

With these excerpts from the minutes of the meeting we have record of such mutual agreements as we need to start the journal on its way.

Sincerely,  
Minor White



"Memorable Fancies"

December 31, 1952  
San Francisco

... The camera must report a revitalization. It must revitalize an experience. Somehow it must bring the poetic experience to the surface. It must report a revitalization of a personality if it is to achieve full stature. The camera-conscious portrait is a first step. A step beyond the candid, the caught, the person photographed unaware. ... The candid is an experiment that had to be fully explored. I feel that for me it is a dead end.

Revitalization—what is meant by this term? If I make photographs of rocks, it is in human terms, in two ways human terms. First, the photo is reminiscent of human anatomy or human emotions, tho the rocks themselves are no such thing. Second, the photo is a stimulus to a human being which can cause him to dream of his mistress, his wife, his mother—not of rocks. If I photograph human beings it must be the same. The man, as he is, is not recorded—or only in part—but the camera records the experience between two people, the atmosphere of rapport is apparent, the rapport itself is made visible. When it is, then the spectator can enter to some degree the experience of rapport too. When it is not, the spectator makes an intellectual appraisal of personality, situation, what have you.

Somehow photographs must be more than the recording—tho it does this superbly well—but it must be a giving. Giving of all the maturity, stature, intellect, spirit and love that is the photographer. A few will be able to do this. Only a few are required.

The background of this speculation was Cartier-Bresson's book *The Decisive Moment*. Apparently the photos in the book "are not enough." They fall short of what I demand of a photograph. He is older and more experienced than I. He started with camera as ART (both the derogatory and good meaning) and grew into photojournalism. One can not pass his progress off lightly—it may be the right answer to the problem of what kind of art is photography. To many it is the right answer. To a few it is not.

To some there is still the challenge that photography can be an art that gives all the maturity, intellect, spirit that is the photographer.

"Memorable Fancies"

January 2, 1953  
San Francisco

I have looked at many a human being only to find their desirability blinding me to their worth.

Suggestions of this which is best in a man I see restated over & over again in the things men build, old doors, fractured reflections in windows—& without blindness in my eyes the beauty of man is clear.

Letter to Helmut Gernsheim

September 4, 1953  
San Francisco

Dear Mr. Gernsheim:

... For some reason I have a sense of "mysticism." Maybe it is simply "romanticism," if by the latter term we mean one who can see two or three levels at once. In this vein the background consists of William Blake, T. S. Eliot, Emily Dickinson. Lately this is augmented by reading in Occidental aesthetics and Oriental philosophy.

The "perilous world of the dream" is my most comfortable backyard. Since I turn everything to photography, I have tried to treat photographs in this same manner. Contrary to expectations I do not go for fuzzygraphs, I try to reach the dream, or the state of mind that is "visionary," with the sharpest photographs I know how to make. Needless to say I have plenty of opposition: Ansel Adams, Beaumont Newhall, Paul Vanderbilt, Dorothea Lange, and Nancy Newhall. The last, however, knows what I am trying to do and realizes the difficulty of it, but is sympathetic to my efforts—in fact this summer she made it clear that her interests lie in the same direction. Edward Weston approves of my effort, tho he is not in sympathy with it, he approves because he believes that the photograph is an external record of inward growth—and therefore if my growth is towards things of the tenuous mental state, then my photographs ought to show it. Now and then, he is delighted when one of my pictures makes the dream apparent to him. He is a hard taskmaster; I suspect that you too will be one to hold me to the line, kick out any but the most transparent dream. But that I appreciate.

... From time to time various images in front of my eyes lift themselves up and beckon to me—I approach at their command—and make the exposure, sometimes reluctantly, but always with such a complete projection of my mental state onto the object that it seems as if the object commanded and not myself. At this intensity I photograph. The result is a record of an experience between myself and the object. The object may be a cloud, a door, a rock, a person, a situation.

If the result happens to look like contemporary "abstract" painting, or happens to look like Leonardo, or Hoffer [sic], or a painter yet to be born, or like nothing on earth, I do not care (As one of my friends said when looking at some recent negative prints, "They make you remember things that you have not known yet").

People often get tangled in the categories, whether the photo looks like abstractions, Picasso, Rubens, documentary, etc. This is hardly surprising, I have done it a million times. But as a photographer I pass up no image because it happens to resemble another man's work. I am slowly learning to recognize those images that are in the thin red line of uniqueness to the man.

The thin red line of uniqueness for me is concerned with metamor-



phosis. With change, with the transitory, the plurality of meanings—I am enraptured with transformations.

The experience of meeting another mind that is like your own is always exciting and assuring. I met such in the Chinese book called *The I Ching: Or Book of Changes*. This is not the work of one mind, but several. Curiously enough it suddenly opened up for me what I try to photograph. There is hardly room to explain it here, but it has to do with focusing a man's thoughts on what he is thinking at the time. It is fabulous in that it tells you what you know. And as one shifts in one's mind from one state to another that which one knows changes in emphasis. Likewise the photograph; the image can be seen to mean different things to us at different times—and since we project our feelings we say that the photograph changes its meaning. Certainly I have experienced how Weston's pictures keep pace with my own growth.

"Mysticism" in photographs is a delightful idea, full of danger of over-reading the visible elements, but perhaps intensely rewarding. I know its danger, and pursue it anyway.

I was explaining photography to a class at Aspen, Colorado, a few years ago, and was trying to make clear in a quick glance how we can view the world. We were facing a cabin, a row of tall yellow poplars, and a mountain behind. I suggested that we take a picture of all this and ask ourselves what we would have. With all this we would be oriented to the cabin's surroundings and the time of year, and to the type of cabin. Since the scene was good looking, even handsome, the photograph might reasonably be expected to be also handsome. Coming closer so as to include only the cabin, we would have had to supply some of the data with words, give the name of the place, the date and time of year, and an historical note. And the photograph would only be as interesting as the picturesqueness of the cabin. Moving in so as to include only the door, we would have had to add still more data with words. Then moving into an area of grain texture of the wood alone we might easily enter a realm of photography that needed no words of any kind, that did not need the history, the place, the time, or any such things. The photograph of wood grain might stop there, and if interesting would be so because the grain formed an interesting pattern. But it might not stop there: It might go on and stir up associations in the mind of the spectator of the picture. When this happened, then, in a sense, the wood grain is transformed into a means of evoking as many moods as people looking at the picture. I feel that this is a legitimate way of photographing. "Graphic" "photographic" and the differences between them cease to be important. . . .

Sincerely,  
Minor White

Helmut Gernsheim. Historian of photography.

### *Letter to Nancy Newhall*

April 1, 1954  
Rochester

Dear Nancy:

. . . I feel much better now that everybody has made a decision and I have made mine too. If I can possibly swing it, *Aperture* will continue. Talked about it briefly with B. [Beaumont] at breakfast—apparently I am the only one to whom it makes a real difference. To me 400 subscribers is not a small audience at all.

My feeling is that we have been trying to be popular and so have not gotten down to saying what ought to be said about photography. If I can make it go another year, I will undertake to write the articles and thereby relieve the founders of worry on that score, and promise to get into no financial burdens whatsoever.

As I was saying to B., without school I have nothing important to me. Eastman House has not become that as yet. So the magazine can become that necessary outlet. That is one aspect, the important one is that the mag has not yet accomplished what I think it set out to do. And until it does I am not satisfied to let it go. I may have to, of course—and if I do, I will rationalize and say with the rest it is a miracle that we got printed at all. Actually it is no miracle at all—it is simply a preordained function. . . .

Love  
Minor

### *Letter to Ansel Adams*

August 15, 1954  
Rochester

Dear Ansel:

I can only agree that with a spiritual sweep even Rochester could provide the material for magnificent pictures—but there is something about this town that blows a dry dust calculated to make any spirit wrap itself in a cocoon.

I have been trying to photograph this summer. Many pictures I have seen and not one of which I have thought worth making. I have obviously made several exposures—that is inescapable—but the satire, the bitterness, the hatred that results, I hate the pictures I make and hate the town worse that makes me photograph out of anger.

Most of it is dull, the rest is quaint. The old houses are wrecks, even more wrecked than I care to photograph, the paint peels in a characterless way, the rubbish heaps and back alleys are either quietly dull or utterly filthy. Even the wall scrawls are without imagination or daring. I have seen just one pornographic picture and they only know one four letter word. This might indicate inner content and a peaceful town, but considering



the hoodlums around the city it only indicates that they can't write or draw. About the only project I can think of for the town is a slum clearance one. The trees cast a gloom over the grey houses that is a sheer monstrosity of depression. And when in sheer desperation one turns to the skies, even the clouds are messy.

I don't suppose I will, but my files would not miss it if I threw everything I have made here away and never made another shot in this miserable berg. . . .

Cheerio,  
Luv! Minor

*Letter to Nata Piaskowski and Martin Baer*

October 18, 1954  
Rochester

Dear Nata and Martin:

. . . I'll never make it to S.F. during my vacation in the early part of December. There will not be enough cash and then, too, I have to put in an appearance in NYC just about every chance I get just now. I have made two trips so far, one in June and one the last week in Sept. Then I just gotta be there when Steichen's show ["The Family of Man"] opens in Jan. That will be big, a big flop or a big success, or maybe just a big mess. I personally feel that it will be the culmination and the peak of the photo-journalist tradition. It may well resemble the creative climax of the Photo-Secession at Buffalo in 1910. Steichen was a part of that show, he is the head of this one. Consequently I can't miss it, the opening will not be important, but the show, definitely.

. . . This summer I managed to make some photographs around Rochester and aside from hating the town more than ever, made a few very swell photos, they fitted into sequence 9 like hand in glove. Curious but I miss S.F. so much that I merely get unhappy that Roch can not be like that town and so photograph only things that might have been found there, or in any town for that matter. But that is natural. Pulling up the S.F. roots was hard and made me homesick. Photographing in a new town means putting down some new roots, and the first few pictures are just nostalgia for the old place. But once a few new roots were down I felt better about ROCH. But heaven forbid my ever liking the place. That would be the last stages of senility.

. . . The work at GEH [George Eastman House] has been very good for me. The contact with Beaumont has borne fruit in a more easy way of writing and a background of photo history that gives more authority to what I say about photography. I knew this would be the outcome, or something like it. Still it has been hard to be away from S.F. I don't suppose that I will get back there for several years. I have a feeling that there

will be a tour of duty in NEW York, in some capacity or other, first.

It is always a long way home.

Good it is to hear that Martin is painting again. I hope that the streak is still on him. We need more painters whose bent is towards the spirit. We need more photographers with that in mind also. Somehow I believe that the next trend in photography will be a sensitive one, even spiritual. That is hard to predict and certainly predicting spirituality in photography is overoptimism, when so few photogs have any capacity in that direction. Still I wonder. Of course I wish it would—and that probably is all that my prediction is based on. . . .

Cheerio and love and things like that.  
Minor

Nata Piaskowski. Photographer and former student at the California School of Fine Arts. Martin Baer (1894–1961). American painter active in California after 1941. Friend of the artist.

*Letter to Walter Chappell*

January 2, 1955  
Rochester

Dear Walter:

The first letter of the year!

I don't know how auspicious it is or how prophetic that I should write the first letter of the year to you; but I personally believe it could not be better. The touch on the world of the mystic and of the spirit that you maintain is important to me, and one that is always in danger of being overwhelmed with the course of events that seem important and are important—many of the projects that are under way are basically of the spirit but making them come off is oftentimes paramount to losing sight of their core structure.

It is very good to hear from you, your letter sounds cheerful and your life seems good.

I'll get prints to you as soon as possible, but that may be a month. I am swamped with a variety of jobs both big and small, some connected with Eastman House and others of my own.

*Aperture* is to go on and in fact the next issue is at the printer now.

I took a MSS [manuscript] of a show that I did last fall with me to New York this week and Hastings House finds they are interested. That may lead to a published book—and I sincerely hope that it does. I can use the money and the prestige, both. This book would be the outcome of many years of teaching portrait photography and leans heavily on the GEH collection of photographs for its illustrations. I have put it together on a conceptual basis of the problems that the photog must overcome to get



past the mask that everyone puts on as soon as he gets in front of a camera.

I was reading the notes for a book on the life of Alfred Stieglitz while in NYC. This old warrior for photography as an art was a fine man, and a powerful one. Reading about him again was a wonderful experience. For he sought only the spirit in whatever art form that kept his attention.

So with many high hopes that your new venture is successful I'll say cheerio again. And with wishes that you come to New York and that we get a chance to talk in an atmosphere that casts the barriers away and that sweet talk flows like the spring cracking river.

Love  
Minor

Walter Chappell. Photographer. Friend and professional colleague of the artist whose photographs and writings are published in *Aperture*.

*Letter to Nata Piaskowski*

March 15, 1955  
Rochester

Dear Nata:

... All the info that you mention regarding Fam of Man I have seen. I have seen the show twice and talked to Steichen about it. The next issue of *Aperture* will contain a symposium on the show by about 8 persons, including me. And I think that it will be well documented and well placed in relation to many things other than its main grass roots theme. As for me, it bores me, but I am fascinated with the technique of the three dimensional movie of stills. I would love to get a chance to work with it.

... Much has happened to me inside while I am here. I suspect that a major turning point has occurred, and if the story were not so long I would tell you how and why. But in brief I have become aware, more than ever, that photographs have to be put to work. My sequences are an example of what I was driving at. The movies are other examples, the editorialized story is another. I am not denying or forgetting the importance of the fine print, the print that stands alone as a world of its own, there is no need to, not the slightest need to. But I am accepting more fully than ever the fragmentary nature of photographs and want to work with them in groups, in books, and shows that provide an experience for people.

The Camera Consciousness MSS deals with the problems of portraiture, and I don't think that the word "art" appears in it once. The development of the art of photography is for a show planned for next September. And what a problem that will be.

Cheerio and my very best wishes to everybody. I wish there were more time to explain. But I am busy and the inner spirit is racing to new conclusions.

Minor

P.S. Photographing again—35mm color—in the manner of my Oregon things. Color because it is time saving. In the old style because I wish to communicate now the extent of spirit that I have learned. Communicate to those who need it—not to those already convinced!

*"Memorable Fancies"*

January 7, 1956  
Rochester

Some vast river of life separates in its bed and comes together again down stream. The island left between is the Garden of Eden in men's eyes, and the waters on each side are named separately the river of truth and the river of beauty. From one shore I have discerned a few stepping stones in the river of beauty and a few rocks to which a swimmer might cling to regain his strength, and I can help others gathered on this shore see these stones and surmise these rocks.

Mid stream, now, I am faced with the cries of waders in the river of truth who ask to be helped across to the garden.

The waters of the rivers are the same, why can I not help them if it is so given me.

P.S. [added June 1964] How easy it is now to see how much of this is simply a reflection of reading—not my own actual experience.

*"Memorable Fancies"*

March 1956  
Rochester

... I now seek, not things as they are but what else they are, those objective patterns of tension beneath surface experiences, which are also true. It is a shift from a belief in the Essence as an absolute to a belief to as near observable truth. Yet of the alternatives ... it can report what else things are. It can even report what else things might be and in so doing invent much as the painter invents. And in so doing cause photographs that depend so little on the object photographed as to be (for all practical purposes) an original source of experience.

Of the following photos, which is true is hard to say—do they partake more of sources—search for patterns of behavior—do they penetrate beneath facts & give a feeling that there are layers fluctuating patterns with surfaces & values. Or do they partake of present day art's search for creation of original experience.



A statement understandable of human beings to this effect.

On the side of art. Until recently art is claimed to be some kind of an imitator of nature. When representationalism was sought, then the degree of illusion was a measure of craftsmanship if not greatness. Giotto strove for realism & was praised for reaching it. Today he is admired for the distance he gets away from representation.

Today there is an attempt to make each canvas a new, original experience in the world as far from a reminder of some experience in the world as possible.

Can the camera do this? Since reporting surface facts is easiest to it, some of it depends on light reflected from objects, it is held firmly to the truth & patterns of tension at the surface or only a little way below. . . .

*Letter to Isabel [Kane] Bradley*

*March 7, 1956  
Rochester*

Dear Izzy:

. . . The best news, and this is why I write, you are the most interested, is a resurgence of spirit!

The past three months recall the months on the island of Oahu when I joined the Church. It all makes much greater sense now. Then it seemed a kind of substitute for creative activity on an art level, now the two kinds of activity are felt to be the same thing.

A mounting mystical activity started last fall. My resident student—Irish, and a potential poet or photographer—had a hand in it. Evelyn Underhill's book *Mysticism* had more than a hand, it gave me the intellectual bird's-eye-view that I appreciate and can benefit by. I wonder what would have happened if I had read it 12 years ago! Probably could not have understood it at all. Be that as it may, this resurgent awareness of God is upon me—blessing enough!

It took two months to read that book, during which time many reevaluations had to be made on my own life. And I was looking up directories of retreats and monasteries; that activity has stopped and perhaps fortunately. Some kind of practical mysticism is being worked out. Chiefly because of a dedication to photography—I want to push that medium to speak of spirit such as I have never been able to push it before; perhaps Stieglitz did.

A new sequence of photos (#10) was made this fall out of the mounting wave of mysticism. It set the symbols of the "Mystic Way" before I knew what they were. Then last week Sequence 11 came together out of negatives made in 1953 of a lad who had a near direct line to spirit. These sequences are "given," as if directed by an outside force.

Few persons have had this experience in photography. And for this reason I feel it is necessary, may even be a kind of duty, to continue for awhile yet in pursuing this way of photographing till it is not a hint of a way, but thoroughly set, that a lifetime devoted to it is necessary. This will give proof that this instrument can carry out the work of God as well as any other. Proof to other people, obviously.

These periods of spiritual activity are very wonderful. It has been anything but a dry spell since the Oahu days, the growth of the soul has been taking its own sweet time. But now it seems fuller than ever before. More of it seems sincere. It is so easy to self induce a feeling of awareness that is self deceiving. Two flashes occur where one used to. . . .

Cheerio,  
Minor

*Letter to Edward Weston*

*January 15, 1957  
Rochester*

Dear Edward:

There was not time to supervise the hanging of your Smithsonian pictures when it was first put up, so we have completed a reinstallation of them. Made the walls white with panels between of black, relighted them, straightened out the lines, regrouped and can look at the exhibit now and experience some of the same fine lift I remember in your own house.

The same serenity—the same edging on eternity. Growth goes on. What I learned at Lobos has been expressed with the barns of New York. Now I am working with faces—their faces, my thoughts seem to be the current of thought. But such only seems. Actually what was given to me at Lobos I am trying to make happen in faces. Eternity, spirit, as Zen says, "When IT takes over." This is the realm of experimentation, the ground that I am trying to plow.

The work is so backbreaking, heartbreaking, that maybe it will be attended with success. For me, pictures of people's faces, and all that goes on behind, has always been difficult. So now I am trying to prove my philosophy of life, and philosophy of photography in the field most difficult to me.

When I waiver, your photographs sustain.

Love,  
[unsigned carbon copy]

Edward Weston (1886–1958). American photographer whose work was influential on the artist beginning in 1940.



*Letter to John Upton*

January 19, 1957  
Rochester

Dear Jon [sic]:

... One more bit of evidence crept out of my conversation this morning that I am getting Zennier than ever. The boys at school have printed up my statement "To photograph things for what they are for what else they are." One of them (Stew [Stuart] Oring, 2d year man) asked me to explain this morning. So sitting over coffee in the back office, which this AM was flooded with sunlight!, I came out with the following; when you photograph things for what they are, you go out of your self to understand them. When you photograph for what else they are, the object goes out of itself to understand you.

Needless to say Oring flipped a bit on that one. The important point for you, however, is that here is a statement obviously right out of *Zen and the Art of Archery*. It occurred to me at the moment that I had invented the notion—again it is obvious that the subconscious grindstone has been at work. So that is the Mem Fancy for this evening. ...

Luff  
Minor

John Upton. Photographic educator. Former student at the California School of Fine Arts and a resident student with the artist in Rochester.

*"Memorable Fancies"*

March 10, 1957  
Rochester

My own place in this thing called "photography?" Lately it has come to my attention that perhaps I have a place in it, not entirely held by others.

The "ultra-personal" might be a name, but a better one is the photograph as dream.

Freudian, Jungian, and Frommian dream. Dream that stems from the somatic wellsprings, from the evil spirits, and from the good spirits, dream that flows out of that which is simultaneously good and evil because life, whether flesh or spirit, is manifest only by tension.

... Reading East Indian mythology of late—and continue to be amused that Oriental thinking is more comfortable to me than Western. Must have been a Chinese Iceman in the Woodpile at some stage of my evolution.

*"Memorable Fancies"*

August 1957  
Rochester

The very crux of photography as a way of life lies here:

If one can not be a tree one can not photo one. Even on the surface this seems to be true of painting from whence the paraphrase, but on the surface it seems far from true of photography. It is claimed that anyone can photograph a tree that can hold a camera. But let's compare products. Only the painter that can fuse the duality of the perceived and the perceiver can paint an inner tree and an outer tree in one stroke. ... Only such a painter can paint trees that will bring the sentient spectator to an awareness of inner and out tree that by himself he might not ever understand.

Starting from a complete separation of the duality of perceiver and perceived, the painter by long experiencing of looking gradually fuses the duality. In a school the degree of such fusion is a measure of a student's "progress." And any instructor is prepared for a long long period of no fusion of any sort on the part of the student, only to have him be able to be a tree instantly, and to paint it at once. In such cases no slow gradual fusion takes place, it all happens "in one blow" as the Japanese are fond of saying.

The same mingling of tree and man must take place in photography, but it is much more difficult to demonstrate. The aptitude for precise rendition built into cameras causes even the ordinary photograph to look as if at least a partial fusion existed between tree and man. There may have been no such fusion whatsoever actually, still the photograph seems to indicate that there was. In so far as it does, the photograph is a lie on both sides, it gives the photographer something that was not actually his, and the spectator a false impression of the tree itself.

How pleasant it would be to think that the partial fusion automatically given by the camera gives the photographer, who wished to photograph truthfully, a head start. But the cold hard fact is that he is handicapped. In spite of what the camera gives him, he still has to go back and start from the utter duality of perceived and perceiver and learn (and earn) somehow how to become a tree, or a building, or another person. In this task, the camera at the start is no help at all. Because the accurate image promises so much, it stands in his way of making the first steps of being the object in front of his camera. The degree of fusion given by his camera must be first thrown away. It blinds his sight. And many years pass usually before a photog realizes this.

However, as he does learn to become the tree, then the camera image problem takes another turn. The degree of fusion automatically given by the camera is adamant, not only does it hand him an image to fuse, but after he has, it refuses to go along. So that his pix before & after fusion look the same. By comparison, paint is easy, pencil simple, ink on Japanese paper, freedom.



But to make the camera reflect that the photographer has become one with the tree is exactly the hurdle that must be met, over leapt time and time again if the photograph is to be truthful, worthy of a spectator's concentrated attention. If inner and out tree are not available in the image to a discerning eye, in the image (& I do mean in part), then his awareness is not increased—and without that magnification of the spectator's life, why look at a painting of a tree, a sculpture of one, or a photograph of one.

*Letter to Tom and Audrey Murphy*

January 23, 1958  
Rochester

Dear Tom & Audry [sic]:

... So much goes on inside that nothing short of a two day gab fest will ever catch you up. And [Lyle] Bongé helped get it all started with his gift of the *Zen and [the] Art of Archery*. I was trying for a long time to relate when "it" takes over to the practice of photography. At the surface it seemed that it could take over only at the moment of exposure; yet I was never satisfied that such was really the case. And so looked further. Considerable reading in Oriental religions, Zen particularly, and the techniques of meditation specifically were undertaken. The meditation technique has been put into practice and it finally dawned on me that photographs can be made while sitting quietly looking at nothing, seeing nothing, camera packed away. This came about during contemplative work on the Zen Koan, "What is the sound of one hand clapping." This intellectually impossible problem never was solved for me until an image appeared on my ground glass one day and I felt that there, for me, was an answer. It took a pair of similar experiences to make it clear to me that the feeling of something could be reached in meditation, and that after that all one needs to do is go look for some confluence of visual events and objects that is an outward manifestation. "It" takes over long before the picture is made in photography.

This may sound quite familiar to you, if you recall the days back in S.F. when we talked about "blank" minds as an atmosphere required to photograph for "found objects." It is familiar, what has become clearer to me is the value of meditation. The mechanism of studying or meditating is a way of using the contemplation or experiencing or "reading" photos to make new photographs. The "blank" mind is a way of tapping the subconscious, and the meditation is a way of consciously putting something into the subconscious to tap (I hope this makes some sense). . . .

Love and cheers  
Minor

*"Memorable Fancies"*

March 20, 1958  
Rochester

The significance of the snowstorm of a month ago is slowly taking shape. It was a rare opportunity, the sense of "transparency" was present but as always not noticeable at the time; the revealed moments came slowly and late in the six-day period of photographing. I did not realize how high the tide had risen until afterwards—when the visual world went opaque again.

Usually I respect the privacy of yards, front or back, and the privacy of windows, doorways, and alleys, but the snowstorm kept people indoors and whatever could be seen was for him and his who chose to wade the drifts and endure the cold. I cherished the storm, in a large part, because it kept people out of the way, it presented my own privacy if I chose to take it—and I did. The cold reached into the marrow of my bones like a lover. . . .

*"Memorable Fancies"*

July 20, 1958  
Rochester

Again the affirmation that visual occurrences around me reflect something of my inner state and that when they are photographed become like signposts along the way. The pictures mark for me, better than I can remember, what can only go unmarked.

It must be realized that while I operate the camera, process negatives and prints, even set the flowers and objects in places around my rooms, I feel no responsibility for the occurrences of light. From me and by me, of me and thru me, I only supply the action, the content comes from elsewhere. Whether from within or without I can not tell the difference.

... I had not perceived the "coming in" when seen, nor in the negatives; the proofs showed me which was unmistakably the revealed moment. "It had taken over" without my being aware. I was left to discover the occurrence in the photograph. I bowed to the spirit later; i.e. to its footprint.

Some will consider the above a damaging statement to some reputation accredited to me. I do not. This is often the way of the relation between myself, camera, subject and spirit behind subject and myself equally: because this happens I accept. But not without question. I have thought about this problem many times in the past year. Chappell especially has claimed that one must glean from the ground glass the awareness of spirit and fullness of statement included. . . . And I am sure it is better to be able to contemplate the ground glass or the vision long enough to discern what magic the glass ground into a lens was performing so that I could "bow to the Buddha" when it passed instead of waiting.

Old habit prevails. The long training persists to observe without thinking deeply. My working fast without much thought is a form of permitting



the intuition to work unhindered. So while lately my intentions are the best, when photographing I always forget to contemplate the ground glass—or experience fully what I see there. As I have written, and often say that for me “recognition triggers exposure.” When working thus, consciousness of the subject is little more than an awareness of importance; i.e. there is a measurement or registering of the degree of importance, but not the content. The previsualization of the picture is in terms of tones most and content least.

This moment, this period of seeing the picture and exposure, has an element of blank for me. It seems similar to the Zen archer who does not know when the arrow is released because he does not release, it takes over. This is the kind of blankness I mean.

This seems contrary to what Stieglitz and Weston have said about the instant of exposure: namely that at the moment everything that a man is, past present and future, fuses at the instant of exposure. Probably their supreme awareness and my “blankness” are similar: when successful “it” has taken over. For those of my temperament this moment may always contain that element of blank. Emily Dickinson names this element in pain. . . .

*“Memorable Fancies”*

October 20, 1958  
Rochester

. . . At first given to me, later I learned to make chance moments occur by looking at anything until I see what else it is. Such looking leads below surfaces, so far below, indeed, that once I claimed “creative photography hangs on the faith that outsides reveal insides.” Then I meant that photographed surfaces must reveal the essences of objects, places, persons and situations. Since then I know the opposite to be also true: photographs of rocks, water, hands, peeling paint or weathered fences consent to mirror my own inner occasions. Hence, in photographing things for what else they are, I can go either towards myself or away from myself. Ultimately there is little difference, as Master [Meister] Eckhardt, the German mystic, said: “The eye with which I see God is the same eye with which God sees me.” . . .

*Letter to Roger Mayne*

December 27, 1958  
Rochester

Dear Roger:

. . . Your pointing out that *Aperture* publishes “abstract” looking photos without claiming that they are imitations of modern art is real insight. Photography does not live in a vacuum and how else would you expect

the art minded photographers of the period to respond to their environment? Of course it is a “new pictorialism.” Helmut Gernsheim warned me of this a few years back. So that makes three of us that are cognizant of what is happening in one small backwater of photography. But without making excuses for the so-called abstract photography imitating abstract painting, I know that a few of the practitioners are working sincerely and directly from the revelation of the object and because the image touches their souls. In these few cases if the resultant photo happens to resemble abstract art, it is more unfortunate than disastrous. But their intentions, contrary to the announced purposes of the photogs of 1900–1914 to emulate painting, are photographic and antipainting. I speak of my own work, that of Aaron Siskind, Harry Callahan, Frederick Sommer, to be specific. A few of our students are trying to follow in these same footsteps; notably Dwain Faubion, Rose Mandel, who are no longer students, and Caponigro and Forgash, who are so recently under tutelage that it is unfair to label them as yet.

I am aware of the arguments that the journalistically minded photog puts forth for his kind of photography as the “true” art of photography and I can only say that I am unimpressed. For one thing I do not care about a “true” art of anything chiefly because no one can tell me what “true” anything is. I look at journalistic photography and for all its search for truth all I can see is that for all the truth that it captures it lets twice as much escape. There are exceptions—some of your pictures—the child crying in the street for example. It is only when the journalist either accidentally or by the grace of God transcends his subject matter that I can begin to see that he has gotten some truth beyond surfaced facts that are so obvious as to be commonplace and impossible to raise into the extraordinary. There is no magic in the commonplace that is not seen there by someone. Lately I am bored silly with photojournalism because it does not communicate enough; impatient with the documentarians because they do not document enough—to a man they are satisfied with lead soldiers.

. . . In my estimate (at present) the pictorialist—and I am speaking of men of the stature of a Stieglitz or a Weston or a Chargesheimer, not the Royal amateurs [Royal Photographic Society] or the PSA [Photographic Society of America] imitators—the pictorialist at his best is aware of the narrow spotlight photography points at truth and within the limits of the medium is truthful in evoking a feeling. If the truth the pictorialist can evoke is insufficient, if it is not poetry, then I suppose we will have to admit that photography is a superb folk art and skip it.

. . . Happy New Year

Cordially  
Minor

Roger Mayne. British photographer who is published in *Aperture*.



*Letter to Peter Bunnell*

July 1959  
Portland

Hi Pete

... Trip has been ecstatic! 33 times

Traveled in the hot afternoons, got to a place and cased it in the early evening. Photographed in the morning.

As well as snapping like a mad dog at every postcard that we passed. And there were millions.

Had to wear blinders thru lots of the country. But wanted to stop and cover every section.

Met a road down the hills at Clarkson on Hwy 95 that made poetry of ascending and descending a hill. We did it twice each way for the sheer time-space feeling!

The Columbia Gorge is magnificent. Forgetful of the country, seeing it again makes me realize that my early photos of Oregon are remarkably true to the experience.

And so to two weeks of talking pictures instead of making them.

Cheerio.  
Minor

P.S. The land makes the schools of photography! Every painter I know has some pile of rock that echos.

Peter Bunnell. Historian of photography, educator, and museum curator. Former student at the Rochester Institute of Technology. Friend and professional colleague of the artist.

*Letter to Ansel Adams*

December 10, 1959  
Rochester

By the Beard of the Profit

Get those reindeer off my pine tree, fat man! Requoting you incidently. Chewed on your letter and loved the ink between my dentures.

Would you agree (and I want an ANSWER) that a healthy individual, both in mind healthy and body healthy, could have a healthy Unconscious?

And that such a paragon could be an artist?

And that he could present his Unconscious to the World via paint or light sensitive emulsions and in Berenson's phrase thereby "enoble" other men?

LuFFFFFFFFFFFFFFFFFFFF

P.S. I am glad that you invented that word LUFFFFFFFFFFFFFFF because it sort of stands for that feeling that I have now and then of communicating with dear ones when the telephone lines are down. Paul [Caponigro],

You, Nancy [Newhall], LaRue, Beaumont [Newhall], Chappell—we say "love" but that does not describe the deeper fact that we love because we are all light bulbs burning on a line from the same generator.

Minor White  
LUFFFFFFFFFFFFFFFFFF  
Minor

*"Memorable Fancies"*

March 10, 1960  
Rochester

... I have often said that for anyone who likes self pity—homosexuality is a grand source—and my response to it has always been weeks of longing, recriminations for a few moments of pleasure. The rising intensity was enjoyable—and wrecked by intercourse, followed by weeks of name crying in the wind. ...

So this brings up the fear of women—showed as boredom or indifference and avoidance of situations leading toward intimacy—yet desiring the intimacy—of mothering.

... Is the teeter-totter of anger and self pity fulcrumed on fear? I recall from Sequence 13 the statement "By a law of yourself you are condemned to live in fear of those that will love you." What LAW? What and why Law?

At this I invariably trace back: the fear of thunder and lightning instilled by Grandmother White: the undermining of the family relations by Grandmother Martin. Dad once said, when I was indulging in a memory of Nana, that it was she who alienated me from Dad—and Mother? Maybe I am beginning to see that he was right. Grandmother's ancient garden—I am still living in it—the year of letters and poems to a sailor at sea—what a shock that was to understand, when he returned, that I was simply carrying on a tender kind of poetry with myself—nostalgic, a bit tearful, full of the baying of the fog horns at the fog—not even a dog baying at the moon.

The fear of thunder and lightning has dissipated, but not entirely gone even yet—loud noises, loud voices, talking not done by myself, etc. But was the fear instilled? Actually induced by another? I am very unclear about this—can not remember Grandma White at this juncture (3, 4, 5?) but remember sweating under the covers at Nana's house in every electrical storm. And Aunt Grace comforting me by letting me hang in her arms in bed. 7, 8, 9?

And trace back to the image of the little boy standing on the stair landing reciting something. The image was always that of seeing the little boy as if a member of the audience—it changed recently to the little boy standing and looking out an audience—that is completely blank—I get a voice



of father laughing. What happened here? ANYTHING at all? (It was prior to 6 year old). (As we moved from that house then).

The question now: I hardly know where to start; on the fear, on the anger, on the self pity, on the God knows what—on the present on the past. Is the whole structure of my dreams and understandings (?) false as they have been built up lately? I can not even hazard a guess.

... A psychologist would look for the reason for the break—perhaps that is the crucial point. But where is it. My mind goes back so glibly to the child standing on the stair landing that I no longer believe that is the crucial point.

Is there a moment of truth in any of my life? ...

*"Memorable Fancies"*

March 22, 1960

Rochester

... Reading Ouspensky *In Search of the Miraculous* trying to locate myself thru that. Points always at no work can be done alone. And I find that the wanting to be alone is surging up again. As [he] says of me, neither dead nor alive. I do not want to release him because he can help. ... Ouspensky makes a picture of two persons in a man: that I can only know about the Minor White who everyone knows and who I also know and yet this is not the real person. And that sincerely one can not see the other more real "I" without help. And [he] has been pointing my eyes, mind, heart, genitals, hands, feeling towards just that realization—and there is no seeing yet.

He has pointed out my fear—and it has not lessened.

He has pointed out my inability to understand what I photograph—and that has not changed (I pulled out the pictures of sex that I have made for 20 years the other evening just to see how blatantly how effectively I have made that statement in photos—together they are very obvious—it includes the hanged skeleton of the cat! There is barely a female genital in the lot—only the mixtures the homosexual forms.

... There is the ingredient of self pity in all of the above—and I can ask how honest I am in performing the duty of looking at myself and my work for the well spring of sex. It seems to me to be a kind of first thing first. Referring to Ouspensky again—the suffering is the hardest thing to give up—the fantasies say much more or more so, or less—but has to go also. Plenty of both of these are present. So if I can look at my photos, editing, and all the rest down to the sex generator, and see the twisted, hard links—so much the better.

... It has occurred to me that perhaps the camera REALLY DOES show me myself, both as "White" and as Minor and maybe even a trace of

what is deeper still. I have said so often enough—but this is the crux, I have said so to students without ever quite believing it myself—at least not enough to really dig in and see for myself. Fear of what I will find? ...

*Letter to Gerald and Peggy Robinson*

October 5, 1960

Rochester

Dear Jerry and Peggy: lufffffffffluffffffffflufffffffffluffffffffflufffffffflq

... Seniors have the two following assignments so far.

1. Digest Paul Klee's *Pedagogical Sketchbook*. This is an organic development of the medium of painting. Organically develop the same for the medium of photography.

2. The question was asked this morning: what was the significant moment of understanding that occurred to you this summer? After we all tried to get this verbalized, the assignment was given to photograph, in some way, out of this experience so that the viewer would get at least the sense of discovery even if he did not "discover" for himself from the photos exactly what the photog understood at that moment.

The theme this year has been: everything that you do is to be a form of making a photograph; washing dishes, practicing law, making love to your wife, studying Economics, listening to MW sputter in class, etc. The advantages are that even when one does not have a camera in hand one is exercising the creative process involved in making pictures. This theme is not intended to just watch everything for photographic potentialities. The theme means to think like a photograph, like a camera, like a creative person at all times.

... The trip in June and July was a series of Anatomy of Coincidences. The return was quite different—a kind of continual immersion in a direct experience of inner stillness. This last sentence is completely off as I reread it—it is much too pretentious, too inaccurate, and, and simply dreadful. But the experience was continuous, rather than a scattered necklace of moments.

... Taking my assignment to the class seriously let me relate in brief the three outstanding moments of the summer: A sign in the sky at the Olympics: a cloud barb that pierced the rainbow halo around the sun and the sun [moon ?] exactly on their equators; at Crescent City Drid Williams danced a classic East Indian form: jagged, fast, angular, difficult. Out of the radiance of her face I suddenly found myself looking directly at an inner stillness, at an unmoving center that made all the movements possible. I am moved to unmovement every time I recall the experience; at Silverton, Colorado, I saw three Navaho rugs on the hotel lobby wall: There again was the inner silence of the desert staring me in the face. The



effect of the land on the collective unconscious of a people stared at me—and a kind of silence spoke to a silence.

Talking to Drid afterwards we mentioned something pertaining to “ultimate objectivity” and the vitality of the classic forms that could only be vital because the performed had acquired the unmoving center, within him, from which all movement flows. At a place called Vermilion Cliffs on Hiwy 89A (I think) in Arizona or So. Utah there was a moment of being still with myself.

This desert country gripped me.

I will come out the southern route next year—and may well return the same way. I was going over the color stuff made on the way to Portland—it is too relaxed. But from Lobos onward wow! Yosemite, Lake Tenaya, etc.

We have all the negs processed: and no time to print until the pile of letters is reduced and the current issue of *Aperture* gets out of my hair. The 4x5 B&W has some honies in them. . . .

affectionately  
Minor

Gerald Robinson. Attorney and photographer. Participant and coordinator of early Portland workshops. Peggy Robinson (ca. 1932–ca. 1968). Hostess to the artist in Portland.

*“Memorable Fancies”*

August 1, 1961  
near Los Angeles

. . . There is a growing awareness that nature has taken a 2d place to people in my pty. None of this shows in pix yet—& I have been saying this for some time. For people & OF people: my preference For may soon change to OF. We are heading for Lobos & the bonds with Bill [LaRue] are cementing—perhaps we will work again with only a camera between us.

The rational & the irrational seem opposite words but really are the two wings of spirit. One red, one blue has no bearing on flight. . . .

*“Memorable Fancies”*

1961  
Rochester

. . . The photographs in a Sequence or Constellation may be compared to dance on a theme. The major point or points of the whole are stated and restated with variations until the very last member of the audience has encountered it or them. Likewise the Sequence must be long enough, either in number of photographs or time of study, to sustain the viewer until he has directly experienced the inner “meaning” or “message” or

“manifestation” or Being. The viewer who is willing to bring his heart, mind, viscera, and intuition to play upon a Sequence will reach an understanding.

Producing a Sequence is not only working with existing photographs. Sometimes a few photographs will come together in such a way that I can see what photographs I must find or make that will fill out the sketch; that is, provide the photographs that will help sustain the feeling state. As the poet says, “The line is given, the rest is up to me.” Transliterated into camera this reads, When the photographs are given the Sequence image is up to me—.

Since I first used the term in 1948, “Sequence” has grown in meaning. Sequence now means that the joy of photographing in the light of the sun is balanced by the joy of editing in the light of the mind.

*Letter to a photographer*

November 1, 1962  
Rochester

At long last there was the appropriate time last evening to study your prints. So for several hours I looked at them, thought, and finally selected what seemed to me to be your biography. . . .

These prints outline for me a rather tragic story of a man’s life. I do not actually know whether it is your story or not. Yet the prints sort of crystallized out of the whole 200, crystallized or precipitated whatever the right word is. The story is familiar to many people in our society: childhood home, for some reason the sex wires get crossed, confusion, self pity, anger, guilt all arise in various combinations. The remarkable psychological image of the nude with the tools is the most direct expression of the hidden desire to transform the male into the female that I have ever seen. Thereafter come the twistings caused by the psychological blocks, the anger and the disintegration, the denying principle in the human being becomes stronger and stronger. Seen as fear, self pity, vanity and a host of posturings. And there is no end to it, the inner conflict is neither resolved by solution nor by death.

Not a pleasant story. Nevertheless it is a story that IF YOU WISH and IF YOU CAN SEE THE STORY you can universalize and then offer to people as a mirror of themselves. Your photographs are still mirrors of yourself. In other words your images are raw, the emotions naked. To present these to others they need appropriate clothes. These are private images not public ones. They are “expressive” meaning a direct mirror of yourself rather than “creative” meaning so converted as to affect others as mirrors of themselves. I wish that you would read *Acting: The First Six*



*Lessons* by Richard Boleslavsky. In one of the chapters he discusses this clothing of the naked emotions that is necessary to art.

I found tears coming to my eyes as I went thru these photographs, the whole thing is pathetic, ill, the inwards turning of one who became confused many years ago, retreated from the world, and eats his own heart out (Because it tastes so good?). This reaction was for psychological reasons. On the craftsmanship side, the printing is generally dreadful, and frequently you do not know where the pictorial or image edge of the prints are. That you have no knowledge of editing is of little consequence, tho I hold, light to be sure, that a man who claims to be a photographer rightfully can visually edit his own images. In the same day I was able to compare your photographs with those of Frederick Sommer. He uses subject matter that would make even you squirm (chicken guts). But he looks at his photographs on the walls of his home for months before he permits them to be seen by others. He can edit. And his images are, when they work at all, mirrors of the man looking at them as well as being mirror images of himself—in brief universality, appropriately dressed emotions and inner psychological events.

I deeply appreciate having this large collection to study because there is enough material to confirm findings, rather than suggest. I have met you, seen you, and feel moved to suggest that you try to understand your work. It is very real. And further suggest out of a welling heart that you try to universalize your private images and make them for the love of other people.

[unsigned carbon copy]

*Letter to Ansel Adams*

December 27, 1963  
Rochester

Dear Ansel:

... We have often talked about the Inner and the Outer man or inner and outer "life." These are both forces and both real. Esoteric teachings emphasize the force and reality of both the inner and outer, and one is not better than the other, instead both are necessary to each other. The thing that man can do is to recognize the tension that really stretches between the two. The two are like the opposite poles of a magnet and the field between is also real. As an individual I have been trying to be either in the outer world or in the inner one. And the conflict is profound. Esotericism teaches me to be aware of the conflict and to try to grasp that conflict as really a reconciling and third force to the other two. Only when the inner and outer are in effect on each other does the third force func-

tion. Cripes this is hard to say convincingly. And I am fairly positive that I have not made you understand anything. But I have tried, and will continue.

Blessings,  
Lufff  
Minor

*Letter to Florence White George*

December 30, 1963  
Rochester

Dear Mom:

... As you say I am not satisfied to live in Rochester, yet the possibilities of returning to S.F. seem to be remote, and the possibilities of staying here get better all the time. Well, so far as I am able to spend a few months each year traveling in the west that will have to do. I guess I will just have to remain dissatisfied and let it go at that. This continuous atmosphere of conflict over living city is useful to me if I take the trouble to make it so, not as a means of being satisfied but of being aware of the value of conflict that is continuous and subtle.

I hope that all this explanation makes some sense to you. Anyway if it does not ask some questions.

Meanwhile keep happy and going along as you find best. I still suggest that you make greater efforts to attend this church that you have joined. It will keep you out of too much self thinking. I wish for 1964 for you that you get out more into the world of human beings. Some of them are quite wonderful. And so my wish is that you find one or even two that will enliven your life.

Love  
Minor

Florence White George (1882–1965). The artist's mother.

*Letter to Ansel Adams*

May 17, 1964  
Rochester

Dear Ansel:

Your last effusion of euphoria—whew

I happened to be in a thoroughly "serious" mood, and hence out of wavelength. Nor did I make any attempt to get in tune, even though recognizing a definite high flying rhythm. The perception was working so much better in my then mood of lucidity.

What did I read? Between the lines of course. It was the classic record entitled *Dither on Either and Or*, Opus 50 No. 1435-7503-P-438K. The



theme of which is that photography has some sick people in it, and they are an anathema, contrewise photography has some healthy people in it and there are not enough Ansels. Now when are you going to realize that both the positive and the negative forces of the universe are manifested, in miniature, in the endeavor we call photography? There is no future in remaining caught in the dichotomy of either and or. But there is a future in recognizing the interaction of the two.

If I were a Zen monk I might say that the trouble with modern photography is you. By the time you got that figured out we would both be hungry. So hungry in fact that we would look like those statues of Buddha when he had fasted for several months, and broke that vow to fast because he had realized that asceticism carried too far was not the way to enlightenment. These are skin and bones held together with bits of baleful wire. And at the moment I am not going to explain, if I were a Zen monk, such a statement as, you are the trouble with contemporary photography. It's too good a question to give you the answer too. Better let you discover it for yourself—this is the classic teaching method of the Zen "euphoria."

Let's face it, I have been a student of the esoteric core of both Buddhism and Christianity for about a decade, and work with a group oriented to the Gurdjieff formalization of the esoteric. . . . And I don't look at either the inner or the outer as I did ten years ago. Semantically I make or accept and try to understand the esoteric use of the word Life and the opposite word Spirit. The first refers to all of nature and man that meets my senses both inner and outer, and which I am born into and also am CAUGHT in. On one hand it is to be avoided, and on the other it is all I have by which to encounter the seed of Spirit. The world of Spirit is practically unknown to me, maybe the tiniest speck has been seen, and it is quite different than Life, very different, to my state it seems quite the opposite. Writers and practitioners of the esoteric cores, regardless of origination, make reference to two forces about us. We are born into Life and grow into, later, the awareness of Spirit. At first overwhelmed by Life, later, if we work towards it we may be overwhelmed by Spirit. And that not everyone is capable of this change of awareness.

All writers and reports on the esoteric point out that in Something still larger than either Life or Spirit these two forces which are moving in opposite directions are reconciled. The Holy Affirmative the Holy Negation and the Holy Reconciling, as these three forces are sometimes named. We can be aware of the first two if we make the effort, but our awareness of the third is a gift, possible to be received if we prepare ourselves. I am always full of faith that you understand what I am ultimately talking about.

In spite of apparent differences, the differences seem to be that of approach rather than that of ultimate purpose. So far so good. When you start advising the "enoblement of Life" thru art, I feel that you are perpe-

trating a misunderstanding and mainly thru a lack of proper terminology. In other words the language of esotericism would make your feelings and intuitions much plainer than the present loose semantics employed by not only you but ASMP [American Society of Magazine Photographers], etc. etc.

The lack of sympathy that you show for the photographers caught in life, young not yet able to see anything clearly, is dreadful. For a man of your perception and position to see so many kinds of things going on in the world, such lack of sympathy is simply shameful. . . .

Clear?

LUFFFFFFFFFFFFFFFFFFFFFFFFFFFFFFF

Minor

# *"Preface" to an unknown manuscript*

1964

Rochester

At fifty five years old the words can be read now that at twenty six were only a black spot on a rubber balloon. As the balloon filled at one stage this spot took the appearance of a flower. This flower had three sepals, 6 petals, 6 stamens, 3 ovaries, and one tripartite pistel—a Monocotoledon according to my Botany instructors.

The three modalities are these:

- Possession 1. A greed for possession which the recording power of camera fulfilled to my joy. Light sensitive silver reflections which took a little away from the original, but which I paid for and gave back by a Yes to that which I wanted to choose.
- Equivalence 2. Recollections of the past with love balanced the greed. And I have blessed the metamorphosing power of camera because it thereby yields images corresponding to my memories of things past. Equivalence grew out of this. Equivalence in camera whereby the invisible is made visible to the intuition, the invisible organic, the invisible spirit.
- Sequence 3. The choice of the individual image extended with juxtaposing images and superimposing them and surrounding them with words.

The same "yes" by which one recognizes the individual image, occurs when one sees a superimposing "click in," or two pictures juxtaposed, and one says "yes" to the mental image that occurs in the space between the two. It is the same "yes" that is heard when a phrase in a series works, or a whole sequence, or a whole exhibition no matter how large. This moment of "yes" is the only creativity I know. . . .



*"Memorable Fancies"*

*late August 1965  
Workshop, Cape Arago, Oregon*

Though I may not distinguish at exposure, I can distinguish later in leisure those images given by Spirit from those given by the wisdom of my psyche, from those forced out by suppressed forces demanding attention. . . .

*"Memorable Fancies"*

*June 29, 1966  
Arlington*

. . . To hide my nothingness I let others make responses to pix & I only comment on structure. . . .

*"Memorable Fancies"*

*September 1966  
Capitol Reef*

All my work has been that of braiding together images, words, and teaching. Still the braid itself is not of my doing, it is of my receiving. In acknowledging that braid I am in contact with the Holy Ghost. . . .

*Letter to Ansel Adams*

*November 1968  
Arlington*

Dear Ansel:

Jung studied Astrology along with many other disciplines and says as follows:

The fact that it is possible to reconstruct in adequate fashion a person's character from the data of his nativity shows the relative validity of astrology. However, the birth-data never depend on the actual astronomical constellations, but upon an arbitrary, purely conceptual time-system, because by reason of the precession of the equinoxes the Spring point has long ago passed on beyond zero degrees Aries. In so far as there are any really correct astrological diagnoses, they are not due to the effects of the constellations, but to our hypothetical time-qualities. In other words, whatever is born or done at this moment of time has the quality of this moment of time.

He was pushing hard for his concept of Synchronicity in the above quote. Current findings in the magnetic effects of all the constellations on each other may come closer to what Astrology believes. He is quite right,

of course, that the time-concept is an arbitrary one. The proof is in the pudding, and Astrology has been pudding for over 3,000 years. Quoting Jung again: "But at least there are some facts thoroughly tested and backed up by a wealth of statistics which make the problem seem worthy of philosophical investigations."

Whether I believe in Astrology or not is hardly the question yet. I am busy withholding judgment until I have more knowledge of its claims and its accomplishments. Meanwhile it surprises me with great regularity—and delights me as often.

. . . That was a good time with your presence at dinner and at MIT. One word remains in my memory regarding the attitude you hold toward photography. You were talking about Uelsmann and said that for you the photographic was a "studied" medium. A Cartier-Bresson would have called it an intuitive one. Seems that Camera is indifferent to both concepts because it handles one as well as the other.

The Uelsmann show is up at the little gallery in my box. Strong images, and immensely popular with the students, Jerry is one of the main visual influences of the time. Believe it or not.

And many blessings and much love.  
Minor

*"Memorable Fancies"*

*February 14, 1970  
Arlington*

We can reprint  
our negatives  
from a real place in ourselves  
all our lives  
and expect to find new insights.

*Postcard to Peter Bunnell*

*January 26, 1971  
San Juan, Puerto Rico*

Hi  
Sorry there no time to drop you a note before I left to say I would be in B.V.I. till the 30th of Jan. A warm 75° Jan is a relief. Older I get the tropics are more appealing. Summer in Maine resembles the frosted



egg in the fridg. Completed text  
for the Exp Photog. Now a few  
days in S.J. burning my cameras  
at both ends.

Cheers!  
Minor

*Letter to Gerald Robinson*

October 6, 1971  
Arlington

Dear Jerry,  
... A little news to catch you up. I had an exceedingly successful ten day  
workshop at Hotchkiss School in Connecticut in late June, and then began  
a total rewrite of the Zone System Manual. That was interrupted late in  
August by a workshop at the Center of the Eye, and returned to just about  
finish the manuscript by the time school started here. Currently that is in  
the process of being designed for publication.

Presently, I am working with the graduate class at MIT on a workshop  
basis. That means keeping them busy from early morning to late in the  
evening six days a week. That concentrated period ends about the middle  
of November, after which I will start on the text for the Creative Audience  
book. Oh, yes, by the way, the text for the book I have been working on  
the past four summers, which finally became entitled *The Expressive Photog-*  
*raphy*, started to find a publisher late in August.

The "live-in" workshop at 203 Park Avenue consists of four people, plus  
two others who do not live here. And all of this manages to make a rather  
full week every week.

Most of the time things are going very well with some upsets to keep  
me from feeling smug, and enough of "more of what I came from" to  
keep giving generously. My health remains fine if I don't go too fast or  
too long. . . .

Sincerely,  
Lufffff  
Minor

*Letter to Walter Chappell*

September 12, 1973  
Arlington

Dear Walter,  
I am apologizing to you for not getting in contact with you up in Hum-  
boldt county. When I got to San Francisco I fell in love with it again and  
photographed it for almost two weeks. I was in a mood to stay behind

cameras and looked up almost no one in San Francisco except Bob Brown  
and a couple of Zen friends. It has been too many summers since I have  
been able to photograph, so I forewent friends in favor of the camera. I  
got all steamed up about being a photographer again.

I spent the past three weeks in Peru—a place I have never been before—  
and was transfixed by its beauty. The Andes mountains are incredible and  
its coastal deserts are magnificent. I visited some Gurdjieff friends there,  
which rounded out a fantastic series of new experiences. . . .

Good wishes and blessings!  
[unsigned carbon copy]

*Postcard to Isabel [Kane] Bradley*

February 9, 1976  
Arlington

Dear Izzy  
End of Dec  
heart took  
a tail spin.  
15 Jan I was  
released home.  
Amazing experiences  
with interiors of  
mind & much else  
I know of nothing.  
The religious on  
duty at the hosp tried  
hard—But you do it better.

Love  
[unsigned carbon copy]

*Postcard to Peter Bunnell*

February 9, 1976  
Arlington

Drop in!  
(Gently please)  
Have words  
to exchange  
about funny  
life

Cheers  
Minor



*Letter to Gerald Robinson*

March 18, 1976  
Arlington

Dear Gerry:

... I also want to thank you for sending the tapes of an earlier day. Listening to them brought it home to me that I stick to one subject relentlessly. I heard myself saying on the tape exactly what I had been writing for Creative Audience in the last year or so. Egotist that I am, it sounded good over the tapes.

Recuperation is not fast enough to suit me, but just what the doctor feels is about right for me. So I take heart and go on my merry way trying to regain strength and watch my memory get crazier and crazier by the minute. There are large gaps in my memory that sometimes just a hint of a photograph will fill in quite well. And as to remembering what I did yesterday, I think it could be any time from yesterday to twenty years ago, or twenty years in the future for that matter.

Tentative plans for the future include playing the role of photographer and seeing whether or not I can make a living at it, living at selling prints. It seems that the possibility of doing so is pretty good, certainly better than it was ten years ago. Anyway, I expect to do that a while and stay out of academic teaching. There is a possibility of going back to MIT to do a show or shows of some special nature relating to the integration of the artist and the scientist, not in theory but in practice, as it does occur here and there occasionally at MIT between the various disciplines.

I do expect to conduct a special workshop and I would like to tell you a little bit about it. I am looking for committed photographers who merely are committed because they have been in photography long enough. They also have to know that they are going to use photography as a means of searching for their own inner being and putting that being to work through photography for the sake of other people as well as themselves. I have seen many likely persons for the past couple of years, generally about the age of 25 to 30. ... The workshop I spoke of above might get started in the fall, but again it may be a couple of years off, depending on locating the people and on my own health.

I guess that's all for now. Cheerio

Minor  
Luffff

*Letter to Nata Piaskowski*

April 23, 1976  
Arlington

Dear Nata:

Your card called Chakra Man is an absolute delight. It's the slightly cross-eyed look that gets to me! I have it sitting up on my shelf above my writing desk, and it amuses me everytime I look at it.

Thank you for your kind words of encouragement. Reading your letter was something like going back to the early periods of my recuperation when I was full of enthusiasm for getting well. Unfortunately, I had to go back to the hospital, and I saw it in a much more sober way. I am also having to face the realities of making a living again, and my state of elation, I must admit, has passed. Everytime the sun shines, however, I am pretty much back to feeling very good inside. I was taken off of all medications three days ago because they were causing nausea and an unwillingness to eat that was working against me. Three days off the medication, and I am beginning to be a different person. Food is beginning to taste a little bit good. So now we have to wait and see how things balance out. ...

That is all the news for now, except that the San Francisco Art Institute is offering me an honorary degree in May. I doubt that I will be able to attend, but if there is last minute upswing, maybe I can. In case I am not present, Walter Chappell will accept the honor in my behalf.

Cheerio to everything, and I will be back on my feet someday.

Love & Blessings  
Minor

*Telegram to the San Francisco Art Institute*

May 6, 1976  
Arlington

My heart is moved today because I can participate vicariously in the commencement awards at your institute. I always feel this ceremony makes [marks?] a beginning no matter what the age of the recipient. Especially now, after a long illness, I celebrate the beginning of the final state of my life's development.

Congratulations on your commencement exercises. Blessing for all of us.

Minor White

*Statement to Tama Hughes*

April 22, 1976  
Arlington

I have long since left behind any exclusively conceptual notion of God, because the conceptual is but a fraction of how I seem to experience what might be called the Absolute. My experience involves emotions, physical sensations, along with thoughts and concepts. To say that these three parts add up to a total experience of God would be preposterous. About all I can really say is that when such experiences occur, it is much fuller and richer than any concept of God I have ever encountered anywhere especially in books and lectures.



I find a growing number of young people who verify, in their own way, what seems to indicate an experience of God. The growing number makes me happy and hopeful.

I have been teaching photography for thirty years as a means to conduct a search for self (soul), not in the egoistic but the esoteric sense. I have used photographic exhibitions for the same purpose, notably four exhibitions at MIT, 1967–1974, the third of which was entitled “Octave of Prayer.”

Retiring from academic teaching now, I expect to conduct small private workshops devoted openly to the same purpose; and, of course, I expect to continue to photograph in the same vein as long as I can hold a camera up to light.

Tama Hughes. Editor of the proposed book *God—1976 (In The USA)*.







## THE PORTFOLIO

One of the most important considerations in the development of this portfolio, and of the exhibition for which this selection is the documentation, was the desire to show photographs by Minor White that were not a part of his well-known picture sequences. White was a prolific photographer, but he was also a rigorous editor as he worked toward the resolution of sequences, discarding many excellent images that would not integrate with or readily contribute to his specific pictorial statements. And since White tended to exhibit finished, complete sequences, the unused images were, for the most part, lost to the public, and they remained in his own collection, unseen and unpublished. A confirmation of White's dedication to his finished sequences of images is that in *Mirrors Messages Manifestations*, only about two dozen of the 243 reproductions are not from one or more of his sequences.

The organization of the portfolio took several months. No attempt was made to restrict in any way the use of an image by such superficial criteria as prior publication, date, size, format, or original context.<sup>1</sup> Instead, the totality of a new three-part portfolio was understood to form a pictorial biography, a portrait of the artist, one based on the knowledge of his overall body of work and his particular accomplishments. Each of the three sections has an internal structure: a beginning, a middle, and an end; and each section should be read in terms of iconographic programs or even as an overall thematic narrative. Considerable attention was given to the pairing of pictures in each section. Images were seen to relate one to the other, in spite of date and outside of the specifics of original circumstance, subject location, or pictorial format. In some juxtapositions the similarity of formal devices was purposefully marked over and above the subject content. All of the artist's poetic titles have been retained. These are indicated through the use of italics in the captions and in the checklist. Descriptive identifications of pictures have not been considered titles and have been omitted. Photographs of known persons are identified. All other pictures are recorded by place and date.

The photographs date from 1938 to 1975, with a concentration in one twenty-year period, the 1940s and 1950s, the two decades in

which White produced the greatest number of images. Of the total number of pictures, slightly less than one-third, or only 54 out of 175, have been reproduced before.

The process of selection began with a review of all the prints in White's sequences and in the master set of images in the Minor White Archive. Some 1,000 pictures were chosen to be rephotographed in order to obtain small, work prints. These images were then reviewed over and over as the conception of the portfolio began to take form. The images are not arranged chronologically. For Minor White's work this approach would be inappropriate. White's work did not develop so neatly or fluidly but was consistently retrospective and repetitive. For example, even when working on a sequence White did not work chronologically or toward any preconceived resolution. He took great liberties in combining photographs of various dates and from different locations. He worked out of an intuitive, spontaneous sense of being, following the dictates of his inner self, or what he referred to as "Spirit." Thus, his oeuvre does not reflect a precise evolution so much as a miscellaneous collection of pictures that have come down to us as echoes of the experiences in his life.

The portfolio of ten color photographs that opens this book represents ten such experiences. Beginning in 1955, White set out on a career as a productive color photographer. His archive contains some 9,000, 35mm transparencies dating between 1955 and 1975.<sup>2</sup> He frequently used these images in his classes and workshops as a component of his exercises in concentration and heightened awareness. Some, like those in the 1965 eighty-image sequence *Slow Dance*, formed the basis for a dual projection work intended for presentation to large audiences. That he considered many of his color images as works of exhibition quality can be ascertained through the study of an innovative project he undertook in the last months of his life. This was a color portfolio that was to have been titled "Portfolio Chromatikos." It was never realized; however, records remain that identify those transparencies selected for inclusion and a significantly greater number from which he made his choices.



The ten images opening this book are reproductions of dye transfer prints made especially for "The Eye That Shapes" exhibition. Two of the images selected come from White's proposed portfolio (col. pls. 3 and 10) and five from those he considered for inclusion in it (col. pls. 2, 5, 6, 7, 8). The last three (col. pls. 1, 4, 9) were selected for other reasons. Notably, the picture of the peony blossom represents his earliest work in color (1957) and a typical view camera image of this time (col. pl. 1). It is the only 4 x 5 format picture represented, all the rest are from 35mm transparencies.<sup>3</sup>

White's work in color will be unfamiliar to most people. It reflects all of the subjects that preoccupied him and that are found in his black and white photographs. In several instances he made color and black and white pictures of the same subjects at the same time. This was especially true on the summer western trips in the 1960s. In the 1970s he used 35mm color more independently. But in spite of the similarities in representation, what is clear from the ten images shown here is how remarkable his skill is when he elects to render a complex subject in a color image. As opposed to many photographers who work best in black and white, Minor White had a sensitivity and a way of seeing colors that, while related to his other pictorial conceptions, was different. Few of the images reproduced here would exist the same in black and white, and one never has the feeling that his photographs are colored black and white pictures. It is the mood that the color evokes, together with the harmonies that result from the combining of hues that are so expressive of his visualization and that position these pictures in a different realm than his other work. For White, the color is never decoratively employed, but is always symbolically descriptive.

White most frequently used color sparingly, albeit sometimes vividly, and the color is always rendered in such a way as to intensify an already complex texture of meaning. A comparison between the 1961 *Stone Nest* photograph in black and white (*Mirrors Messages Manifestations*, p. 157) and the same subject in color (col. pl. 2) confirms this point. The picture is an image about deprivation, about emptiness. The rich, subtly muted earth colors in which White has portrayed this scene intensify the meaning to something much more appropriate than solely gray tones. The mood of nothingness, of withered life, is given greater character, and the scene is stripped of all hope. Our emotions, like the nest itself, literally become petrified.

White's repertoire of symbolic representations, such as the

*Stone Nest*, is abundant. It includes, among other symbols: the light, window, boat, arrow, pulley block and hook, ladder, stairway, celestial body, phallus, and the junction box. For each pictorial reference, as with the symbol of the nest, an evolutionary pattern can be discerned, from pictorial device to complex symbol, as White builds on his early literary experience to develop his vocabulary of pictorial expression. Often his goal was to speak in a slightly veiled or concealed language to allow him to address his most intimate concerns. As he matured, however, the full expression of his pictorial symbolism developed, and one could say he came to terms with both his primary lights: Freud and Stieglitz.

The concept of the Portfolio of Photographs evolved over a period of time and from a variety of sources or influences. The most fundamental notion was a recognition of White's life-long interest in the tripartite form, the form of the triptych, the form of the Trinity. White himself had written of the "triad in the center of understanding," in his text for the exhibition "Light," saying "... three forces interacting are sometimes spoken of as a Trinity ... a spiritual law."<sup>4</sup> He went on to state this law, or canon, of photography as he also called it, and it is reprinted here immediately preceding the portfolio. In the context of this canon of photography, three ways of looking at White's work were considered: intellectual, emotional, and spiritual. However, these interpretations were considered to be of the same cloth, reflections of the romantic character of White's outlook. A fuller concept needed to be developed, one that would also take into account the manner in which White executed his photographs and his intentions for them. This new concept became apparent after the discovery of an unpublished manuscript dating from 1964 simply titled, "Preface."<sup>5</sup> The purpose of this text, or its context, is unknown. However, in it White described certain modalities in photography. Key in this manuscript was White's use of the notion of possession in the approach to photographing and in the interpretation of images. Thus, partially from this text, but also from the broader interpretations of his work that existed, the structure of the three thematic sections emerged: possession, observation, and revelation. As the selection was being completed, the three modalities could be seen to somewhat correspond to emphases in his work in terms of periods of his career: possession for the early years, observation for the middle years, and revelation becoming progressively more pertinent in the last fifteen years of his life.



A theme image introduces each section. It is the image of the eye as represented in each of the three modes. In the first instance, a 1975 photograph representing in literal detail the eye of a young man looking back to the photographer, and ultimately to the viewer, pictorially mirrors the way the eye was described in the Introduction; it is the eye with which one sees the world, and with which one sees the picture. For the second section an actual eye does not appear. Rather, in this 1948 photograph, it is as a painted graffiti, a bull's eye or target, or perhaps more pertinently the heliocentric representation of the universe as scrawled on the board wall of a San Francisco building.<sup>6</sup> This representation reflects the theme of the second section, observation, finding, of engagement in the world of sensory experience. For the third section, that of Revelation, an eye in a face emerges from a configuration of ice crystals on a pane of glass. Anthropomorphised and thus elevated to a clear symbolic state, this black eye of infinity, like the iris of the man's eye in the first picture, is the entrance point to the interior of the body, to the most sacred place of the spirit. This final theme image is one that dates from White's most inspired and accomplished period of photographing; and coming from one of his important sequences, *Sound of One Hand* (1959), it is one of his most significant photographs.

The concept of possession is the theme of the first section. Possession is that quality in a photograph by which a particularly vivid rendering of a subject causes both the photographer and the viewer to have the feeling that the image is imbued with personal significance through the force of near literal appropriation. One feels the soaring strength of beauty contemplated. The physicality of the subject's portrayal, be it a naked figure or a particularly sensuous detail of nature, promotes the belief that the photograph is a substitute for the thing itself. When viewing the print, the photographer will reexperience the actual subject and, depending on the authenticity and recognition of the object, the viewer may also find himself in this equation of personal meaning and significance. For the photographer it is then simultaneous projection and retention; the projection of self through the outward manifestation of the acquired object and the retention of subject through the continued existence of the picture as a tangible memorial.

Emphasis in the first section belongs to White's representations of the human figure. His interest in this subject originated as a part of his fascination with the theater. Working with the Civic

Theater in Portland and continuing with the Interplayers theater group in San Francisco, White became a skilled photographer of individual actors and of whole productions (pls. 7, 29). In most cases he worked with the cast outside of the regular production, staging and lighting the scenes expressly for the camera. Even though viewed by many people as a landscapist or a photographer of the natural world, White should be seen as a serious portraitist and figure photographer as well. In the latter area, his photographs of the male nude are especially fine and rarely have been published. From his earliest years in Oregon, White concentrated considerable attention on this subject (pls. 14–19).

The nude or semi-clothed figure plays an important role in the interpretation of the broad themes of his work. In some instances his figure studies exhibit strong formalist and sculptural qualities that connect them to the styles of art from classical antiquity to the Baroque. However, it is their transparent expression of love's embrace that is their most eloquent accomplishment. The men in these pictures are profoundly introspective. Their nakedness and their poses project aspects of both pathos and eros, and they become martyrs, saints of a kind. We feel we are prohibited from violating the privacy of the relationship between themselves and the photographer as we see that their heads are bowed, their eyes are averted, backs are turned, or their arms are raised to cover their faces. In addition to their personal significance for White, these kinds of pictures reveal how he used photography to help with his sometimes uneasy emotional interaction with people. Later such photographs satisfy a sexual covetousness in some cases. In 1948 he completed a remarkable sequence of images that originated in the deepest recess of his psyche. Titled *The Temptation of Saint Anthony Is Mirrors*, this work of thirty-two prints has never been exhibited nor has it ever been published. Three prints from this passion-filled, inspired work are reproduced in the first section (pls. 18, 42, 52).<sup>7</sup>

In addition to the emphasis on the figure, the pictures in the first section also reveal White's sense of contrivance, a characteristic of his photographic style. Related to his ability for staging and direction of actors and models, he took particular fascination in making still lives and setups for particular photographs. Two pictures in section one reveal this in a characteristic fashion. The 1947 photograph of an arrangement of driftwood on the Navarro River beach in California (pl. 20) is a rich and complex still-life image that suggests a certain indebtedness to much of the concurrent



abstract art that White was being exposed to at the California School of Fine Arts. The still life of the dead bird (pl. 24) is an extension of this attempt to more fully translate his surrealist-inspired imagery into one of a biomorphic metamorphosis popular in the 1940s. These creature-like illusions provided him with a vehicle to render the erotic subtext that is found in much of his work in the late forties and early fifties, which is more explicitly revealed in his pictures of male nudes. White made these two photographs on the same day, with the image of plate 20 preceding by only one exposure that of the dead bird still life, thus confirming how integral these two images are to each other and giving us some insight into White's working method and his creative approach. Another demonstration of White's interest in arrangement is the image of a seated figure (pl. 18), where a great piece of driftwood has been placed to conceal the genitals as well as to substitute for it, as this rough, phallic shape consumes the space between the man's legs projecting sexual power. Similarly, the driftwood sticks that accompany the model photographed at the edge of the surf (pl. 19) were placed in the sand by White as the photographing session evolved with the goal of achieving a similar meaning.<sup>8</sup> The logical extension of this approach to symbolic representation extends to three such pictures of nature and man-made forms, seen in plates 36, 37, and 38.

In all of White's work, especially beginning after the war, interest in the simultaneity between the inner and the outer and the symbolic and the real is evident. White photographed in an atmosphere charged with meaning, and he always worked under conditions of concentration and inspiration. He believed that to photograph was to be, and that the act of photographing was a moment of living,<sup>9</sup> and as a further extension of this idea, the places where he photographed were special and inextricably bound up with the forces he felt were generated in photographing. Point Lobos in California was one such place, Cape Mears, Oregon, was another, and also Capitol Reef, Utah. He returned to these places on several occasions over many years. Frequently at these sites unique configurations of natural forms suggested to White the symbolic representations that fit his mood and expressive intent. In the first section such pictures as plates 4 and 41 are both from Point Lobos and reflect White's interest in the representation of the human form. From Cape Mears there is the photograph *Sculptured Birds* (pl. 25), one of the prominent images of bird symbolism that

is illustrated in an effort to demonstrate the various treatments of one such symbol in White's repertoire (pls. 22–28).

White's feelings for women are revealed in this section with the pairings of particular images. For instance, the man before the chained and locked door (pl. 11) and the portrait of one of White's female students, Nata Piaskowski (pl. 12), indicate the difference between a physical and intellectual attitude toward these sitters. The combining of the portrait of the actress Barbara Spencer (pl. 29) with the sensuous, but waxy peony flowers (pl. 30) explores White's attitude toward feminine beauty and desirability. White's comment on the affection or attraction between men and women is seen in the street photograph of a sailor embracing a young woman with the not so subtle rendering of the traffic light with the word "STOP" illuminated (pl. 31). This picture has been placed along side White's tender rendering of two men embracing (pl. 32). The meanings of these pictures cannot be taken lightly, and they are explicitly pointed out as the pictorial recital of White's feelings. Another pairing serves a similar purpose, that of a resplendent naked male figure with a rose symbolizing beauty and suffering (pl. 42) and the tomb adorned with masses of roses in a Puerto Rican cemetery (pl. 43).

The last two pictures in the first section, by way of summation, treat the realities of White's sexual life in photographs made twelve years apart. The rendering of the male nude (pl. 52) may be seen to be one of both bliss and anguish. On the one hand the portrayal of the naked body is seductive and voluptuous, but in contrast to these qualities, the man's gestures are tense, masturbatory, and of self-gratification. Like so many of his early pictures, White's image is polar; that is, it reflects simultaneously extremes of emotion that are almost opposite in character. The ambiguity here, one suspects, is that of his sexual life itself. In the second photograph, a late picture that shows only the extreme of anxiety (pl. 53), the representation is no longer an uncertainty. Two legs and a penis formed of ice are being penetrated by a sharp, barb-like form, which is also phallic. This is an image of sexual deprivation.

That these two photographs function on levels of literalism and abstraction concurrently is a testament to White's way of working. These images are equivalents. Equivalence refers to the duality of the visible and the invisible, and it is through this philosophy that photography was able to serve White so satisfactorily. The equivalent became for White even more than it was for Stieglitz; it



was the vehicle for a discourse on every imaginable theme, from the complex web of the natural to the man-made, from reality to fantasy, from the recognizable to the obscure. The two compelling images that conclude this section demonstrate White's unhesitating desire to incorporate powerful meanings into his pictures, which have interpretations that are both emotional and intellectual.<sup>10</sup>

In the second section the quality of possessing or acquiring is transformed to one of observation, a stepping back from the subject or a distancing of oneself. It is a photographic practice that is the most commonplace; the photographer as observer. Minor White employed this mode between 1949 and 1953 especially with his use of a small hand-held camera. Subjects in this section appear to have been found, come upon quickly, rather than contrived or constructed, and it is the nature of experience that is being photographed. The photographer is in an anonymous world, a participant, yes, but not a player who is seeking to identify himself so literally with objects as in the possessive mode. The pictures are less concrete and more open to subjective interpretation.

Being in the world, there is a strong shift of emphasis in this section from the individual person to that of architecture, the city, and the interaction of groups of people, all subjects less likely to provoke deep and private emotions. It begins with details of nature, as a kind of prologue and as a carry over from the first section, but it quickly enters the larger world of landscape and cityscape, with scenes of great vistas as in plates 60, 62, and 64. Man takes a smaller role in this section, as he is now portrayed as a creature of the environment, reduced in his presence in relation to his surroundings, seen in the figure in the 1974 view of Boston (pl. 108), one similar in spirit to the picture of a Portland street in 1938 (pl. 107), or even to the figural detail of just a man's hand and arm shown against a detail of nature (pl. 95). These juxtapositions of similar attitudes over time draw attention again, in this section where symbolic representation is minimal, to the consistency of White's personal themes. Such themes are sometimes felt in terms of optimism or pessimism, construction or destruction, light or dark. The architectural view made in Portland in 1939 (pl. 109) with its black, ominous windows and shadows, reflects White's negative feelings about the destruction of these historic buildings, and in a New York City view made on West 53d Street in 1946 (pl. 110), the inner, glowing white light emitting from the vibrant architecture, both old and new, illustrates the opposite interpretation.

White repeatedly focused his attention on certain forms or shapes and also compositional configurations. In the selection of the pictures in this section, certain juxtapositions demonstrate these similarities and their origins over time. This is the basis for the comparison between the very literal, early image of the circle of barbed wire made in 1941 (pl. 91) with a more obscure image of a metal ornament made in 1957 (pl. 92), and forming a whole cycle of circular forms, rendered in decontextualized states, without horizon, in plates 93 and 94. Another similarity of configuration in which the forms are strongly reminiscent of each other is the 1954 image of the ventilator pipes (pl. 89) with the deer skeleton and tree of 1941 (pl. 90). Other such pictorial devices are the crossed diagonals or series of triangles (pl. 62), the strong diagonal running against the forward picture plane (pl. 58), and a dominating foreground/background juxtaposition (pl. 48).

White found advertising signs and other verbal elements of the urban landscape fascinating, and he built whole pictures around them. In the 1975 Boston demolition picture (pl. 68), the words "FREE ART" are seen—White's wry comment on the state of architecture or maybe his view of certain modern sculpture. This picture is paired with a 1948 photograph of a plaster cast of a nineteenth-century neoclassical relief of Apollo, the three Graces, and the Hours affixed to the back of a building amid the discarded junk of ordinary, contemporary life (pl. 69). These comments, playing on the notion of the economic and spiritual value of art, of the freedom of taste, and the tenuousness of each, are all aspects of White's humor and criticism of the values held by those in the world around him, whether it be in Boston or a small California town. Perhaps the most vivid depiction of his way of using words can be found in an otherwise ordinary photograph of a strutting majorette marching in the 1950 Admission Day parade in San Francisco (pl. 74). This young girl, in enraptured concentration, whistle in her mouth, baton in her hand, is clearly in charge as she proudly represents her small town and its company of musicians. An everyday scene except for the one word that appears on her hat—"UTOPIA." This single word transforms the entire picture. Is this girl now the emblem of White's dominating woman, or is the depiction a reflection of something more simple and only humorous?

This parade image is one of an enormous body of street photography taken with a small format camera that White set aside after his move to Rochester in 1953. This assemblage of miniature



camera work, a massive urban documentation of San Francisco undertaken between 1949 and 1953, was the basis for one finished sequence, *Intimations of Disaster*, and the foundation for at least one unrealized sequence, or series, called "City of Surf," a title that owed its origin to the poetry of Walt Whitman. To illuminate this abandoned work, particular attention has been given to a large number of San Francisco images in the selection and arrangement of this section of the portfolio (pls. 71–83). These street and city views comprise approximately 6,000 negatives in White's archive, nearly one-third of the total number of exposures made in his lifetime.<sup>11</sup>

A fascinating and important aspect of this San Francisco imagery is how it demonstrates White's commitment to photographing, not simply as an activity but as a basis for gaining knowledge and understanding. We know the world—and ourselves—by the use we make of the world. Influenced by the work of Lisette Model, who he had brought to the California School of Fine Arts to teach in 1949, and by Cartier-Bresson's work, which he admired, White sought out on the city streets the living, sometimes comedic, sometimes frightful, reality of the urban world in which he lived. In addition to parades, he photographed office workers, laborers, pedestrians, street signs, the carnival, art fairs, facades, moving vehicles, power stations, the docks, and the riotous Chinese New Year celebrations. He took particular delight in picturing the playful existence of children, including even the young blacks who inhabited the neighborhoods in the Mission and Fillmore districts. The lone figure, frequently the worker (pl. 88), or the child amusing himself or observing adults (pl. 81), were poignant subjects for him. The pictures of these men and boys can be interpreted as "self-portraits" of White himself, sometimes of his fantasy life, sometimes of his life as an artist, and sometimes as recollections of his troubled childhood, but are seen here as documents of the world around him. With his move from San Francisco to Rochester, White no longer found stimulation in addressing the social environment, and he withdrew into a world within himself. Observed reality lost its allure, and his life began to take on a new direction.

The final two images in section two symbolize this new direction and are more bridging images than summary ones. The 1957 photograph of a ladder extending up into the unknown, into a diaphanous cloud of a billowing cloth (pl. 111), is linked to the view of the interior of White's North Union Street apartment in Roches-

ter taken the previous year (pl. 112). These images suggest passage to higher realms. The ladder and the stairs are equatable symbols and, in fact, in plate 86 one can see them combined in a single picture. In the apartment view the stairs actually lead to the meditation area set up by White in the attic. The fish suspended from the ceiling, the symbol of Christ, points the way directly to both the physical and spiritual space that glows with the light of religious mysticism. These are images then of exterior and interior, of the outer and the inner worlds that had, by the late fifties, become for Minor White the nature of his personal self.

If outward observation characterizes White's middle years, then introspection and the spiritual are the characteristics of the revelatory section and his final years. The pictures reveal the life of the visitor in less worldly realms. What is interesting is that photography is still used straightforwardly, and the artist still addresses the world in front of the camera just as he always has, but an aspect of transforming, of metamorphosis, becomes the critical issue here. The change in the projection of subjects, of ideas, from appearances to the symbolic, is recognized. In all of the photographic acts, from selection, to composing, to printing, and finally in image presentation, Divine inspiration plays a role as the inner spirit manifests itself. Whereas in the first two sections of the portfolio White's images are seen as commitments to the real world, they can now be viewed as the testaments of one who has reached union with God, returning to the world to bring others what he has learned. Life experience has moved from the sensual pleasures of youth, through the outward encounters of young adult life to the meditative introspection of adult life. The peace that faith engenders is the ultimate subject of these pictures. As White himself wrote, "it is the love learned from the flesh turned to a love of God."<sup>12</sup> In this mode White concerns himself now with another language, that of a spiritual geography that is inside him.

One particular symbol makes a strong appearance in this section. It is the Cross, and how it is rendered at various times illustrates the basic contention that underlies the selection and organization of this portfolio of White's work. That is, how an evolutionary pattern can be discerned for an iconographic motif as it moves from a pictorial reference to a fully imbued symbol. White builds on his literary background to develop his pictorial vocabulary. For instance, the Cross is rendered in two very early representations, as an iron door latch in a photograph made in 1939 (pl. 117), and as a



projected shadow of a telephone pole onto a Portland street in a view made in 1940 (pl. 143). In these early images one can feel the young poet's understanding of the possible meanings of such configurations and of their use in pictures like their use in literature. After White's adoption of a symbolist approach in the last years of the 1940s, the genuineness of the Christian significance of the symbol is no longer hinted at, or is its use in any way ambiguous. The two exact pictorial devices are now purposefully used and charged with appropriate meaning in the 1960 rendering of a snow-covered garage wall (pl. 116), or in the 1955 picture from the sequence *Rural Cathedrals* of the Cross projected onto a peaceful field (pl. 144). Once again what is interesting about White's approach to photographing, and to symbolic representation overall, is how he simultaneously used different stylistic approaches—the literal and the abstract. Throughout his mature period, as he found and used pictorial elements to suggestively represent the design of the Cross, he was photographing it also in its exact or authentic form, seen, for instance, in funerary monuments in graveyards in Jackson, California, in 1948 (pl. 174), or in a grave marker in Chilca, Peru, in 1973 (pl. 145).

In several cases a deeper insight into a specific picture was gained by the author through a study of the supporting documents found among White's archive. White's use of titles for particular works, for example, is significant in this third section of images. On the back of the mounted proof card of the 1951 Point Lobos picture *Moment of Revelation* (pl. 131), there is written, "the climax of an afternoon of growing communion with the *place*. See *Memorable Fancies . . .*"<sup>13</sup> The corresponding entry in White's journal reads as follows:

I started out to photograph saying to myself, "What shall I be given today?" And knew the difference in attitude from "What can I find today?" Along what we call Weston Beach my eyes opened. Exposure after exposure along a line of rising emotion. Twenty exposures later I thought I was thru and turned around to leave—instead turned into the most important of the afternoon. Tired, I was reluctant. But not a no could live long then. Regarding the ground glass there was no hurry. No impatience gazing at a few rocks become as transparent as the water in a tidepool. The eyes of people I have loved have opened like this at times down to where they lived. I have been excited many times by Lobos, taking from it mirror images, beauty, whatever was there / now I took nothing. I looked and received. Identification / communion. The exposure was made with pure silence. A record of an experience between man and place.

Looking up, back to earth once more, the vision of the beach was so strange—to see it as a human was strange. I made two more exposures.<sup>14</sup>

This moving commentary about *Moment of Revelation* is a particularly fine example of White's journal texts. There are many such instances where a picture, in its own richness and authority, qualities that White recognized in what he termed a "realized" photograph, is explained by a text that enlarges the dimension of our entire experience. White's use of titles is very important, and he would often name images, sometimes providing a clue to his intent. Some titles, such as *Resurrection* (pl. 122), *Ritual Branch* (pl. 132), *Moon and Wall Encrustations* (pl. 139), or *Beginnings* (pl. 142), are more personal. Others are clearer statements of how the symbolism is used. For instance, one title, *For Edward Weston* (pl. 96), was given to a photograph made on the day that White learned of Weston's death in 1958. The frozen water of the cascade is now stopped and is used as the symbol of White's feelings on the influence of Weston's work, of the role that Weston placed in White's life as catalyst and mentor, and whose living influence has now ceased to flow. Another title illustrating how White employs equivalents is *The Three Thirds* (pl. 158). This title provokes a literal reading of the formal components of the picture: the bright cloud-filled window, the middle section of flowing material, and the third, a broken window, as the passage of life from birth, through middle age, to death.

*The Three Thirds* is in many respects an abstract image, and it demonstrates how White positioned himself to symbolically load and decontextualize a scene. White's abstract mode of photography was more often achieved by pointing the camera down. This device, together with the extreme close-up, are two of White's most characteristic formal conceptions and the ones that enabled him to achieve a decontextualization of the subject. In his own terminology this idea was characterized in the phrase, photographing "for what else it is."<sup>15</sup> The operation of the camera in this way is the major shift in his compositional style for this third mode of photography, and it became a fully mature feature in his work around 1951.

During White's last thirty years of work, his photographs move further and further away from the common, depictive possibilities of photography. Instead, through cropping and, also importantly, through printing, White causes his pictures to take on the quality of presences, of being objects in themselves, with only a



sybiotic relationship to the real world. His pictures become like prismatic miniatures and glow with an opalescent, inner light. This quality of projection is achieved through abstraction and decontextualization. Rarely does he direct the camera on the horizontal. Rather, most often it is pointed down, and he himself moves closer and closer to the subject. Each move affects the evolution of both. The edges of the picture are cut so that the continuousness and comprehensibility of the real world is denied us, and the nonrelational ambiguous spacial rendering, neither flat nor recessional but all over, is made to confound us in our desire to see simply a unified pictorial representation. Many photographs in this third section illustrate this effect, and they are some of his finest, late images: Santa Fe, New Mexico (pl. 147), Rochester, (pl. 150), Henry Mountains, Utah (pl. 152), and Batavia, New York (pl. 153).

The two final images in section three are summary in intent. Even though the image of the cruciform grave markers was made in 1948 (pl. 174) and the great sunset over the Tetons was made in 1959 (pl. 175), the two pictures are unified across this time span by a deep religious spirit that infuses both images. White sought not only to achieve union with God through his spiritual exercises, his studies of comparative religions, and his reverence for a simple, meditative life, but most importantly through the practice of photography itself. The portfolio ends on this note of belief in the ultimate joy that photography can transform the sensory experience of the real world into the mystic's domain where God can reveal himself. In his text for the catalogue *Octave of Prayer*, Minor White wrote, "We need something personally special to help us remember

or realize the deeper nature of our yearnings in photography. Each of us may want to find a name that uniquely fits his idea and feelings for a meditative foundation of camerawork."<sup>16</sup> For White the term he used was, "Grateful Meditation."<sup>17</sup>

Years earlier, in 1951, referring to the qualities he saw in the work of the Mexican photographer Manuel Alvarez-Bravo, White wrote his friend Nancy Newhall that Bravo's work revealed to him "an acceptance of life so large death is a part of it. An affirmation that does me good and gives strength again."<sup>18</sup> This is the meaning of these last two photographs in the portfolio, and they sum up White's career. The symbolism of these pictures unfolds, almost in synoptic form, through the final pictures in this section: the body of the crucified Christ (pls. 148, 162, and 163), the skull (pl. 155), the life passage (pl. 158), the door (pl. 159), the light (pl. 161), the burning bush (pl. 164), the boat (pl. 172), the arrow (pl. 173), and the final two already noted.

It is out of this entire stylistic ensemble, iconographic and formal, that Minor White has given us a collection of unique photographic imagery. In his rendering of the world around him, he found in every subject the potential vehicle for the depiction of his message as he came to understand it. This portfolio reflects a body of work that speaks of a special intelligence and an individual personality. White's pictures go beyond their interpretation as renderings of things. They become conveyers of precious beliefs that are the insights of a sensitive and humane artist anxious to take his viewers beyond the range of their understanding and guide them to a more fulfilling existence.



## NOTES

1. With the exception of the ten color pictures, all of the prints selected for the exhibition and used in making the reproductions for the book are originals. In most cases they are vintage prints. And since White was not always a consistent printer, especially in the years before 1953, the quality varies. Some prints he probably intended as file prints rather than for exhibition, but if their overall rendering was viewed to be satisfactorily representative of the period, they have been selected for inclusion here. They represent his work at critical periods and are, in most cases, the only prints that exist. Some prints have physical defects, such as cracks, abrasions, or small stains, but the decision was made to include these prints because of their significance and the unhesitating desire to treat them as originals that reveal the capricious ravages of circumstance.

The same consideration was given to the sizes of the prints used in the exhibition. An effort was again made to seek the most representative print, even when that meant exhibiting, for instance, a small vintage contact in juxtaposition with a much larger picture. All of the pertinent data regarding the prints is included in the checklist that appears at the conclusion of the book.

2. Only one of Minor White's color photographs was published in his lifetime, that of a Japanese tree peony in the August 1959 issue of *Camera* magazine.

3. White made a number of view camera images in color in the late 1950s, including some on color negative material, but he abandoned this format until the early 1970s when he took it up again, first in Puerto Rico and then in the west during the summer of 1973. In total, he did not use this format extensively, and there are only about 200 4 x 5 transparencies and 100 4 x 5 color negatives in the archive. These numbers include several duplicates.

4. Minor White, *Light* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1968), 73.

5. Minor White, "Preface," 1964, n.p. This text is reprinted in the section of unpublished writings. See also, "Memorable Fancies," April 15, 1964.

6. I would like to thank Emmet Gowin for suggesting the latter reading of this photograph in a conversation on June 19, 1988.

7. Two additional photographs from this sequence are reproduced in the third section (pls. 125, 148).

8. Interview with the model in the photograph, William Smith, October 7, 1988.

9. "Memorable Fancies," August 1959.

10. For background on the interpretation of the two photographs discussed here see Joseph B. Rauch, "A Study of the Temptation of St. Anthony Is Mirrors." Senior thesis, Princeton University, 1987; and Claude Cookman, "Steely the Barb of Infinity: A Personal Reading." Graduate seminar paper, Princeton University, 1987.

11. Significantly fewer prints of these images were made by the artist considering his output.

12. "Memorable Fancies," March 4, 1956.

13. Minor White proof card for negative 51-248.

14. "Memorable Fancies," August 19, 1951.

15. Letter to Nancy Newhall, July 20, 1953. See also, "Memorable Fancies," December 25, 1955.

16. Minor White, *Octave of Prayer* (Millerton, N.Y.: Aperture, Inc., 1972), 26.

17. Ibid.

18. "Memorable Fancies," September 7, 1951.





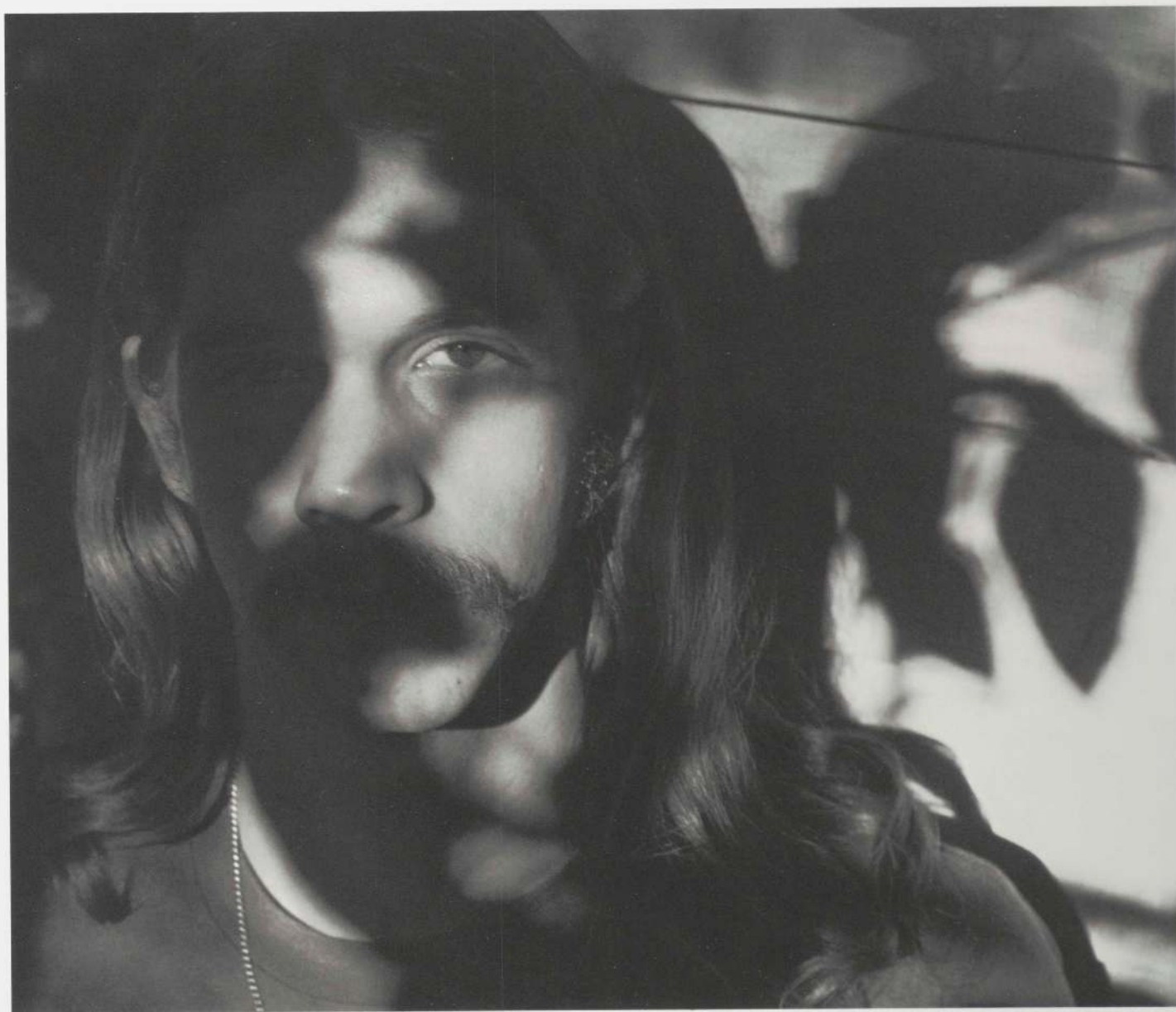


PORTFOLIO OF  
PHOTOGRAPHS



When the photograph is a mirror  
of the man  
and the man is a mirror of the world  
then Spirit might take over.





1. David Ulan  
1975



2. 72 N. Union Street, Rochester  
1956







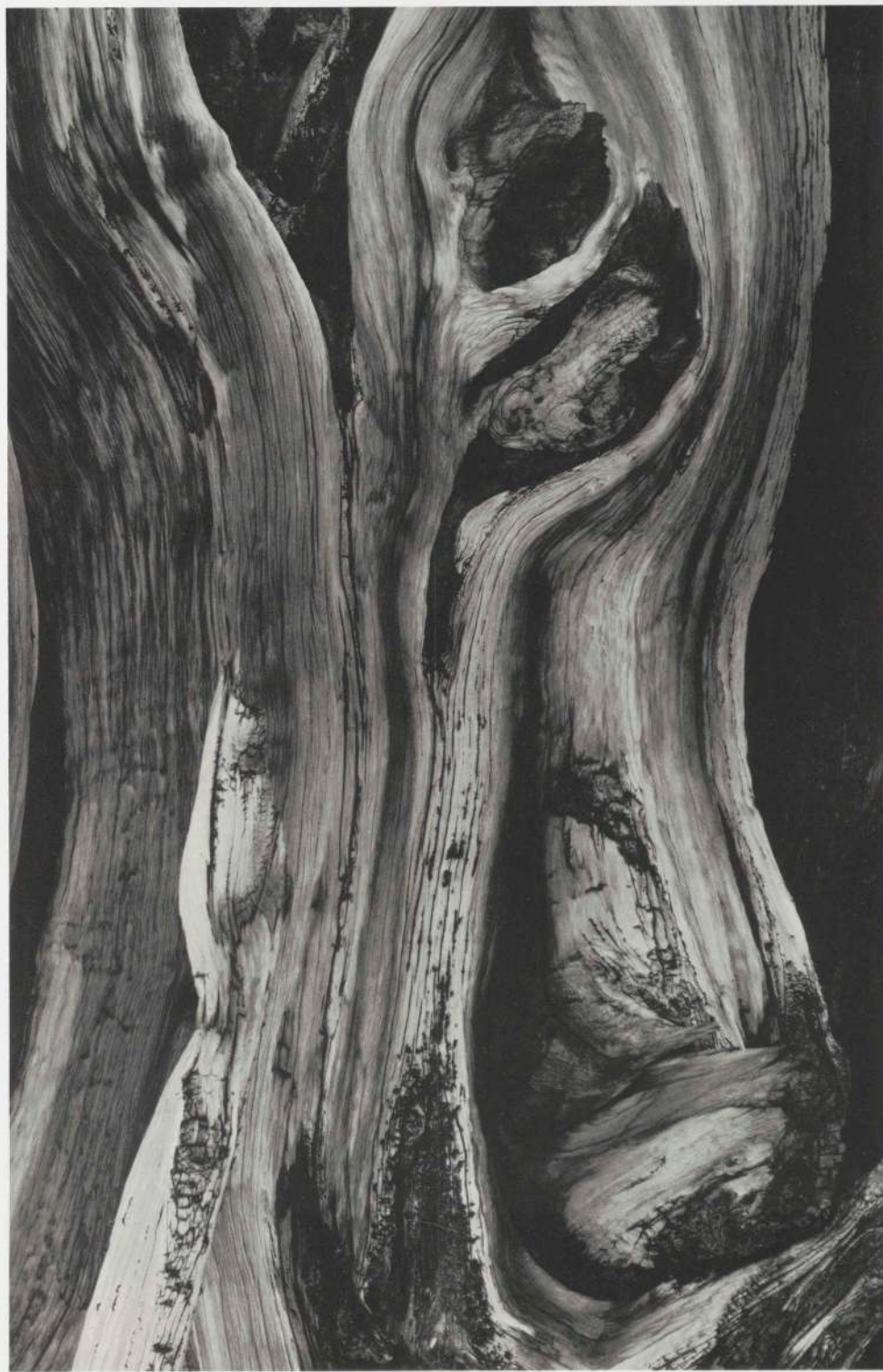
3. Mouth of the Russian River, California  
1949





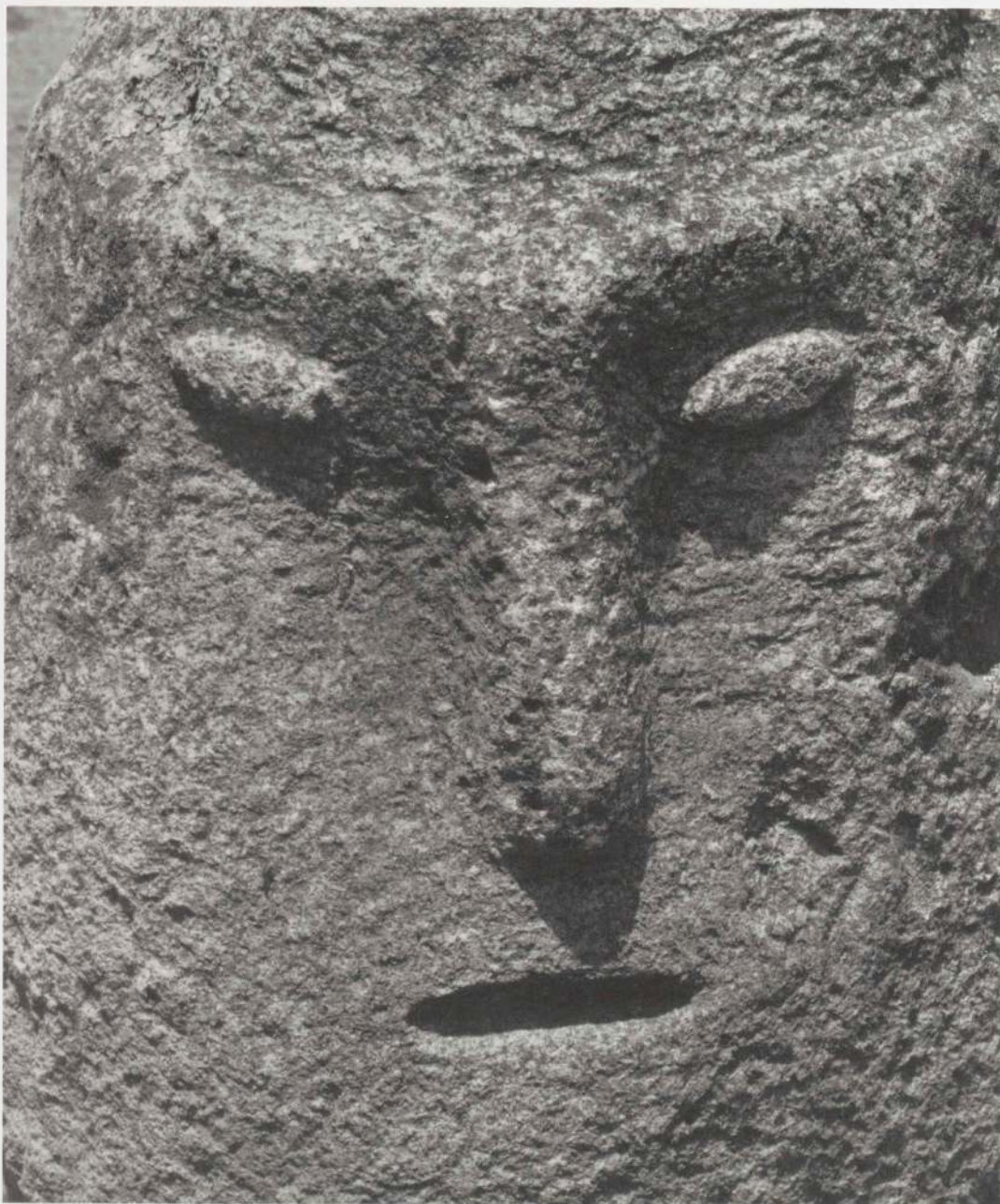
4. *Double Navel*  
1947





5. Lake Tenaya, California  
1964.





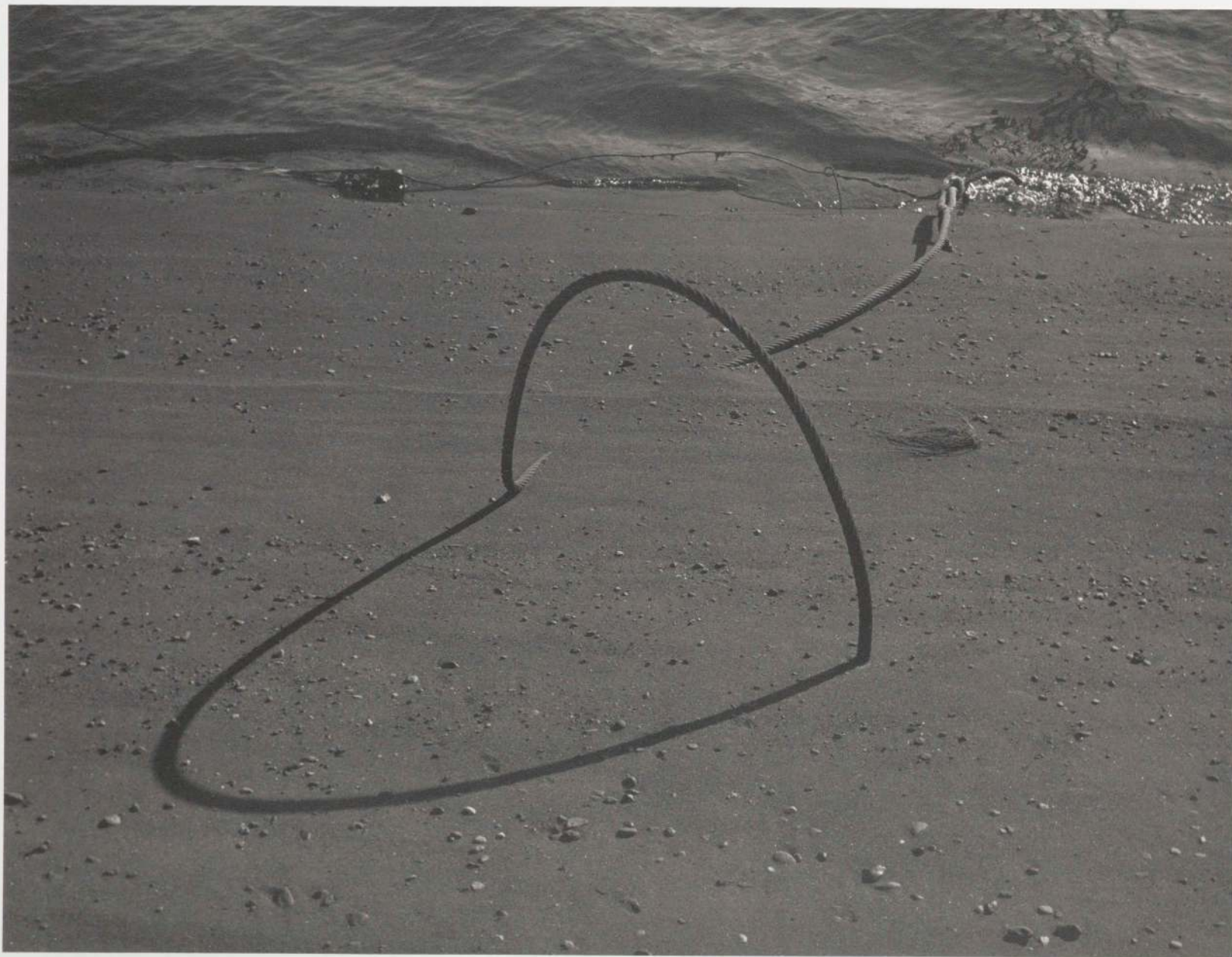
6. Museo del Padre Soriano, Huraz, Peru  
1973



7. Mark Adams  
1950

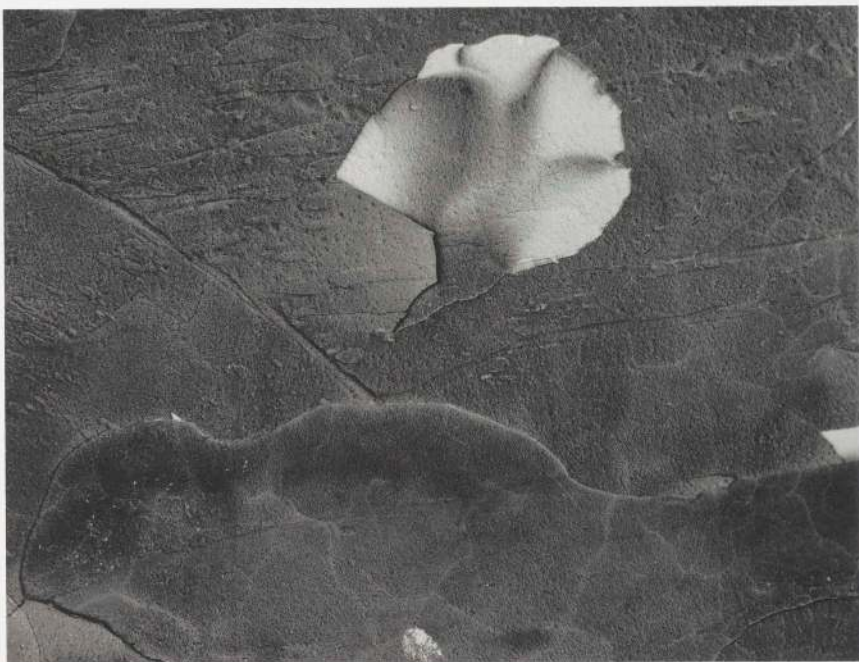






8. Portland  
1939





9. Potrero Hill, San Francisco  
1931



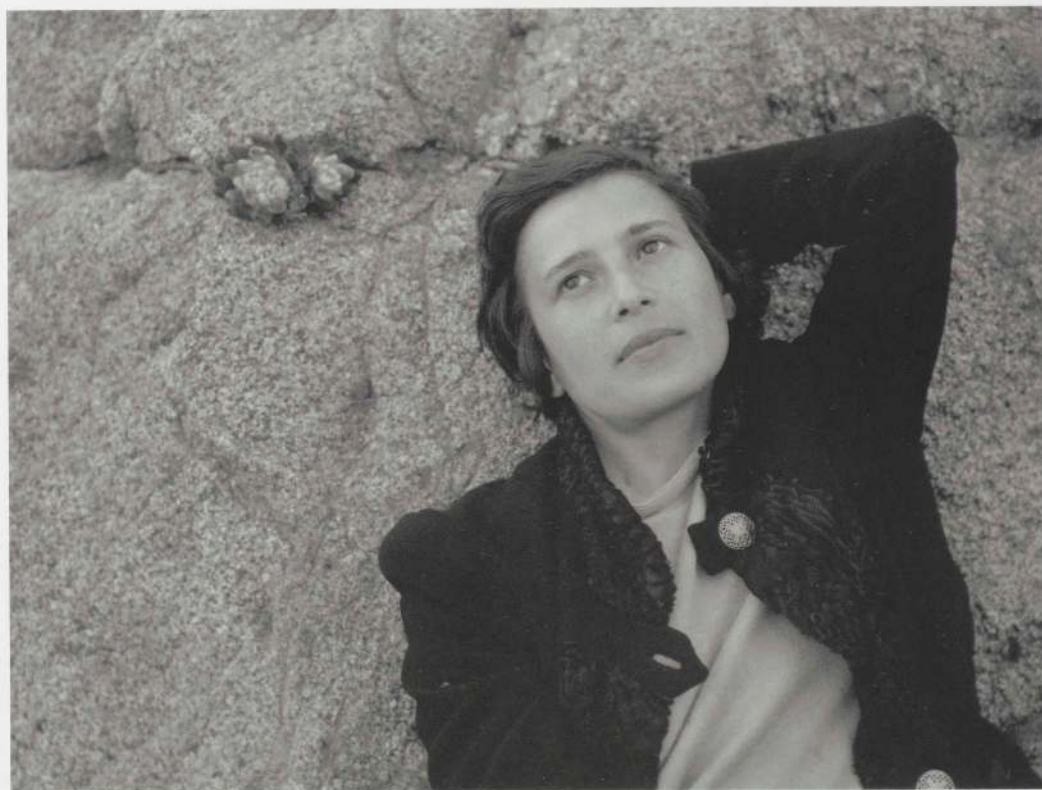
10. Vermilion Cliffs, Arizona  
1960



ii. Mendocino, California  
1948

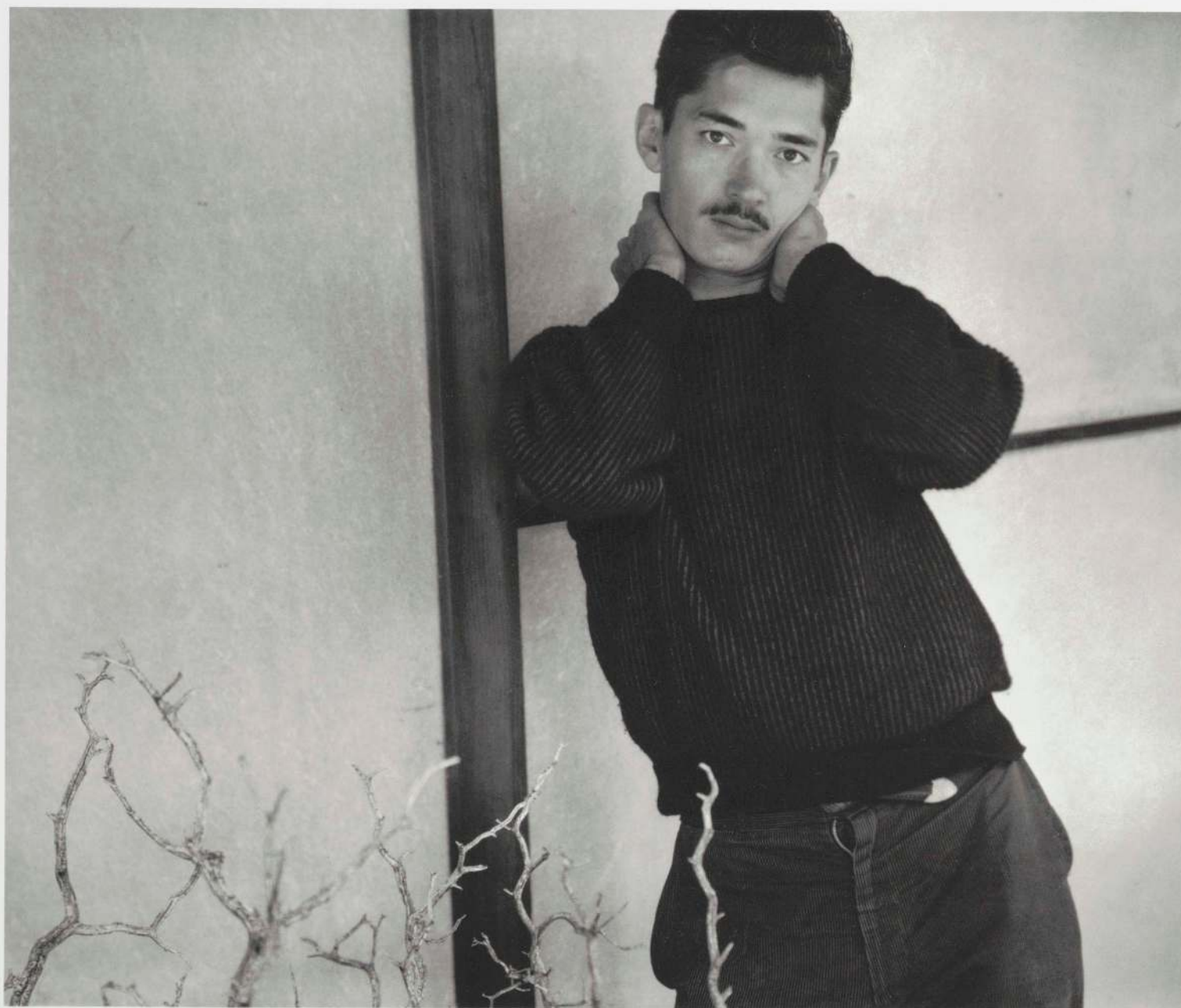






12. Nata Piaskowski  
1950





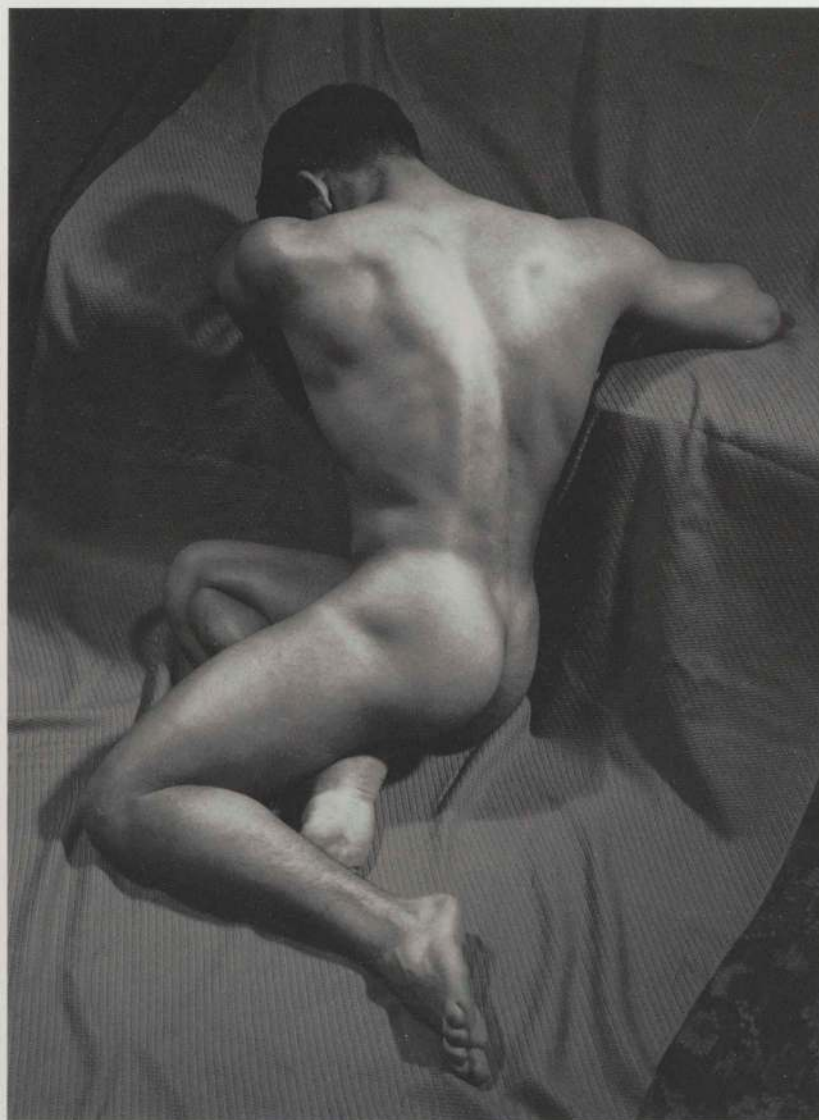
13. William LaRue  
1959





14. Earle Curtis  
1941





15. Gino Cipolla  
1940





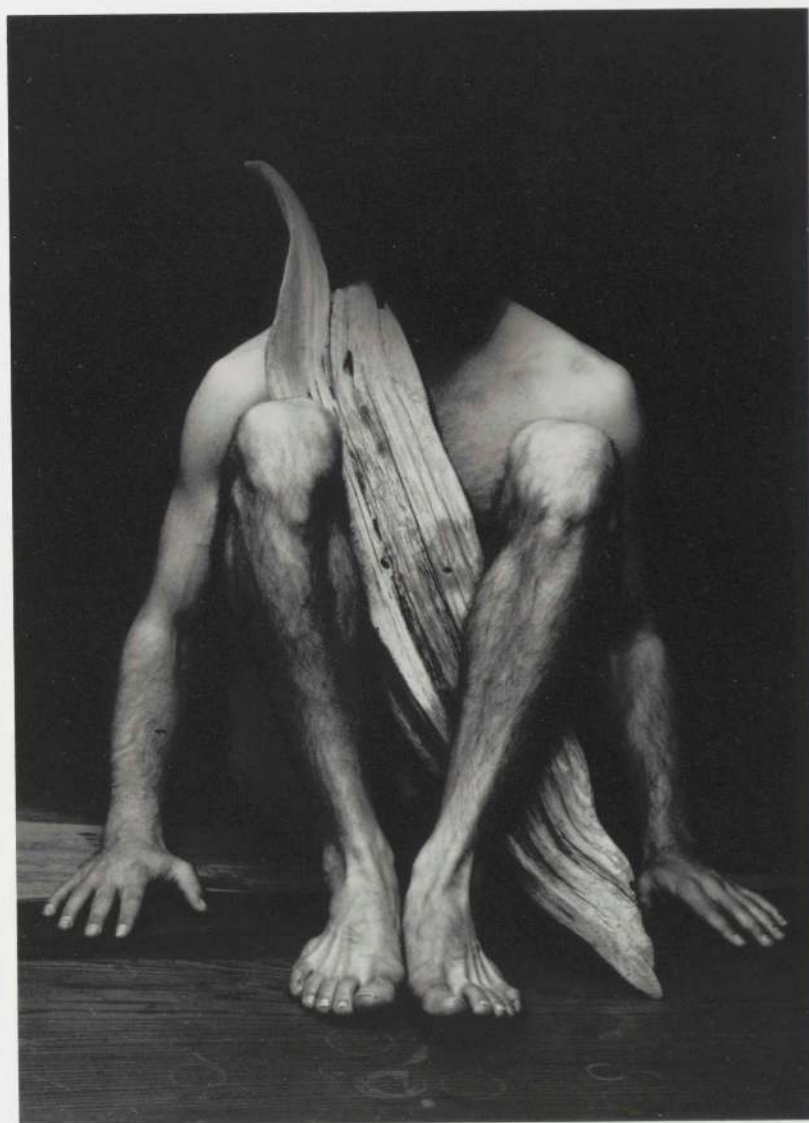
16. Portland  
1940





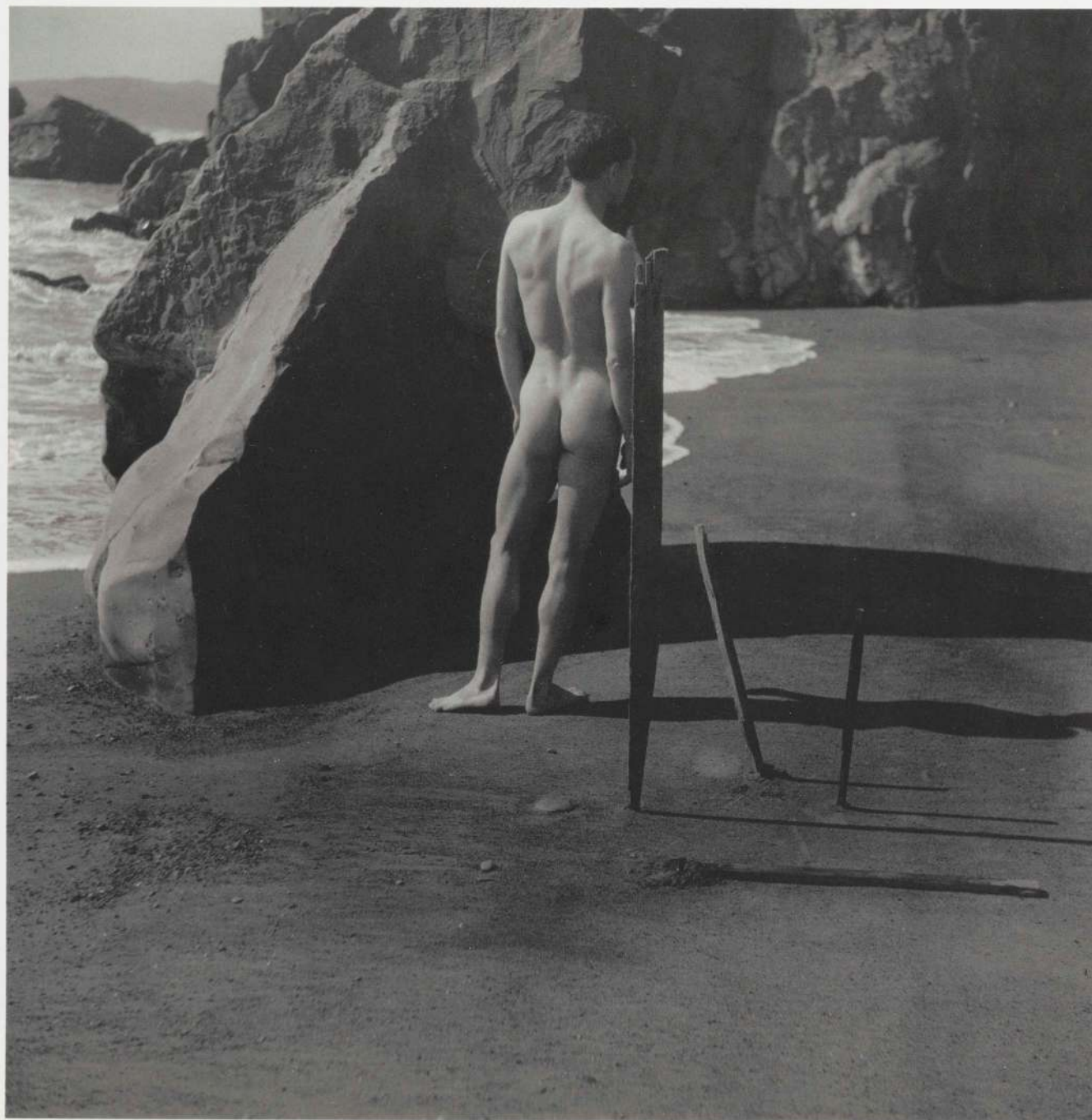
17. Tim Asch  
1951





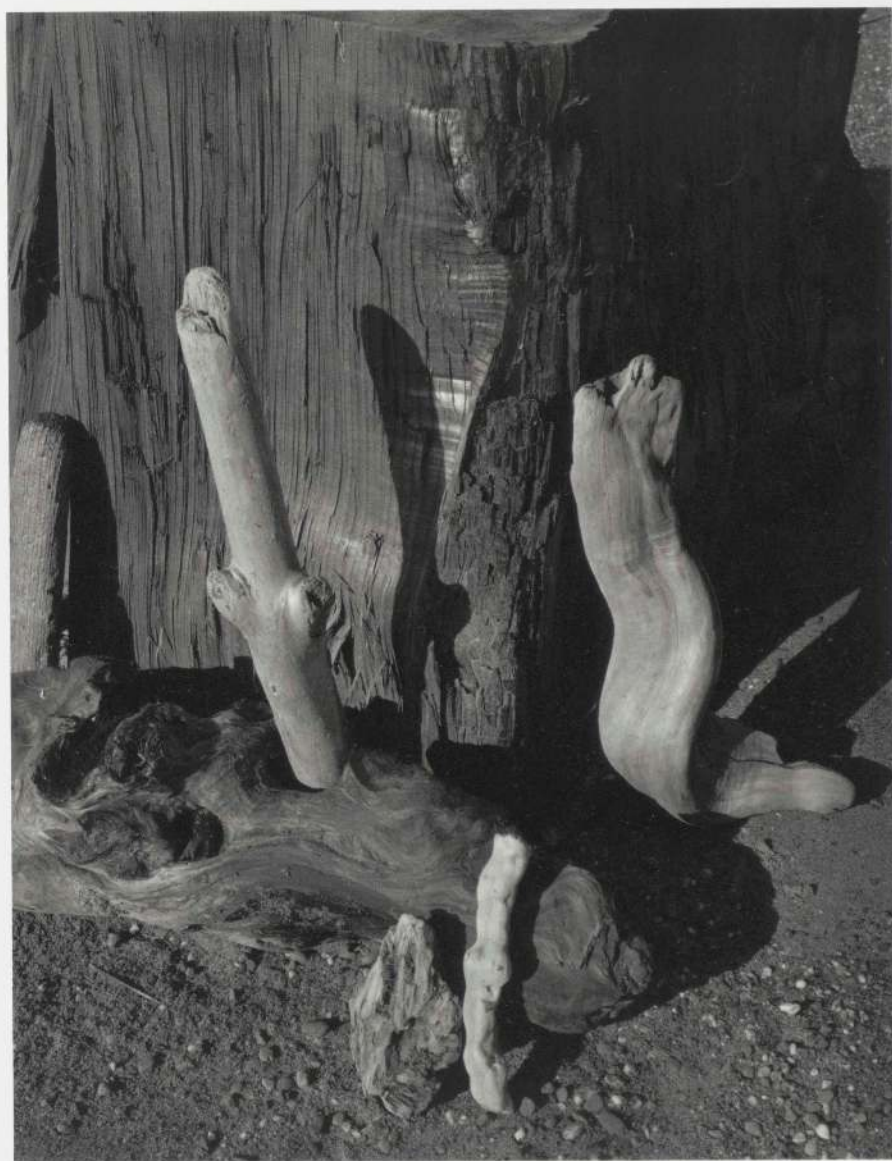
18. Tom Murphy  
1947





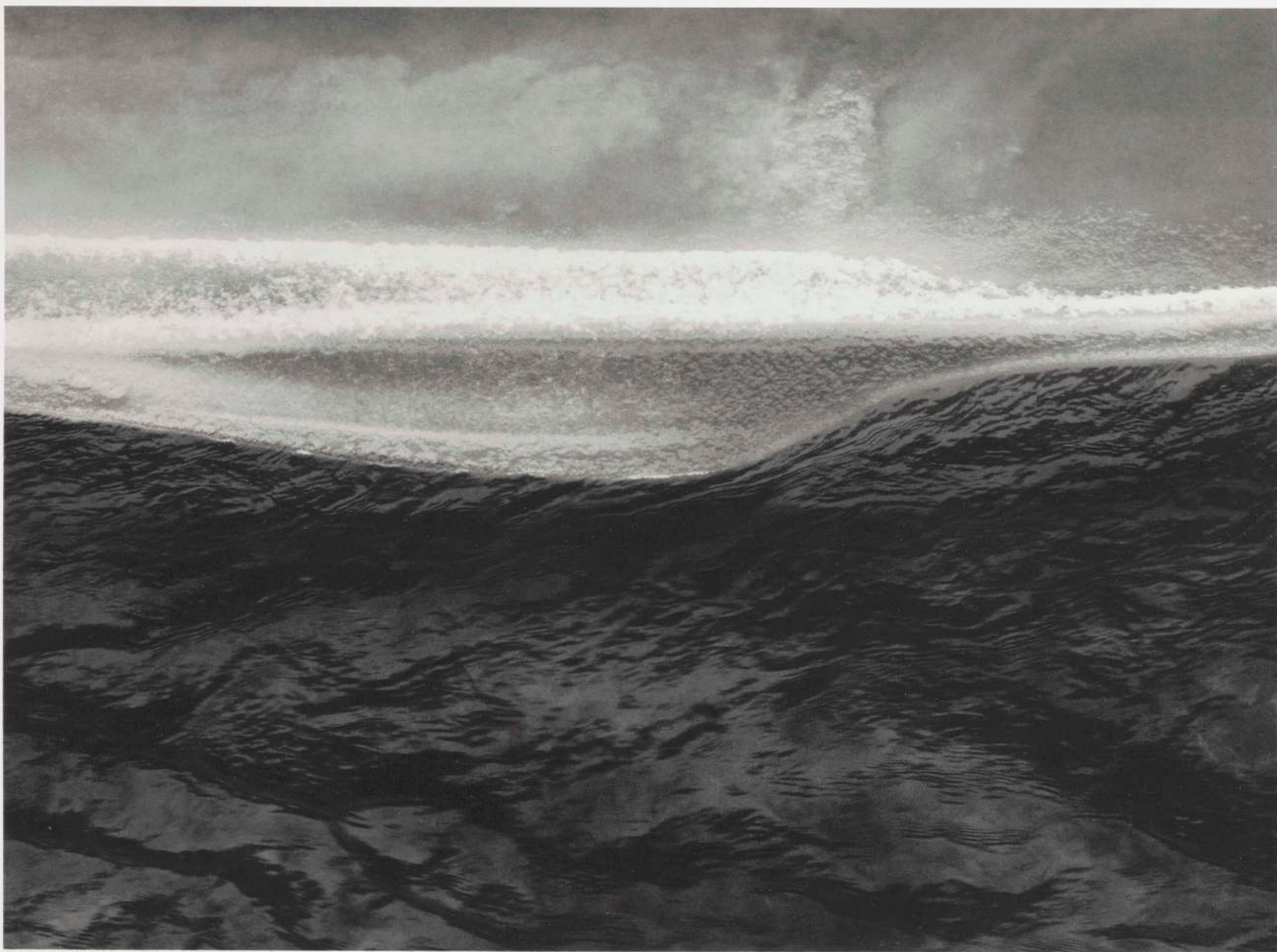
19. William Smith  
1953





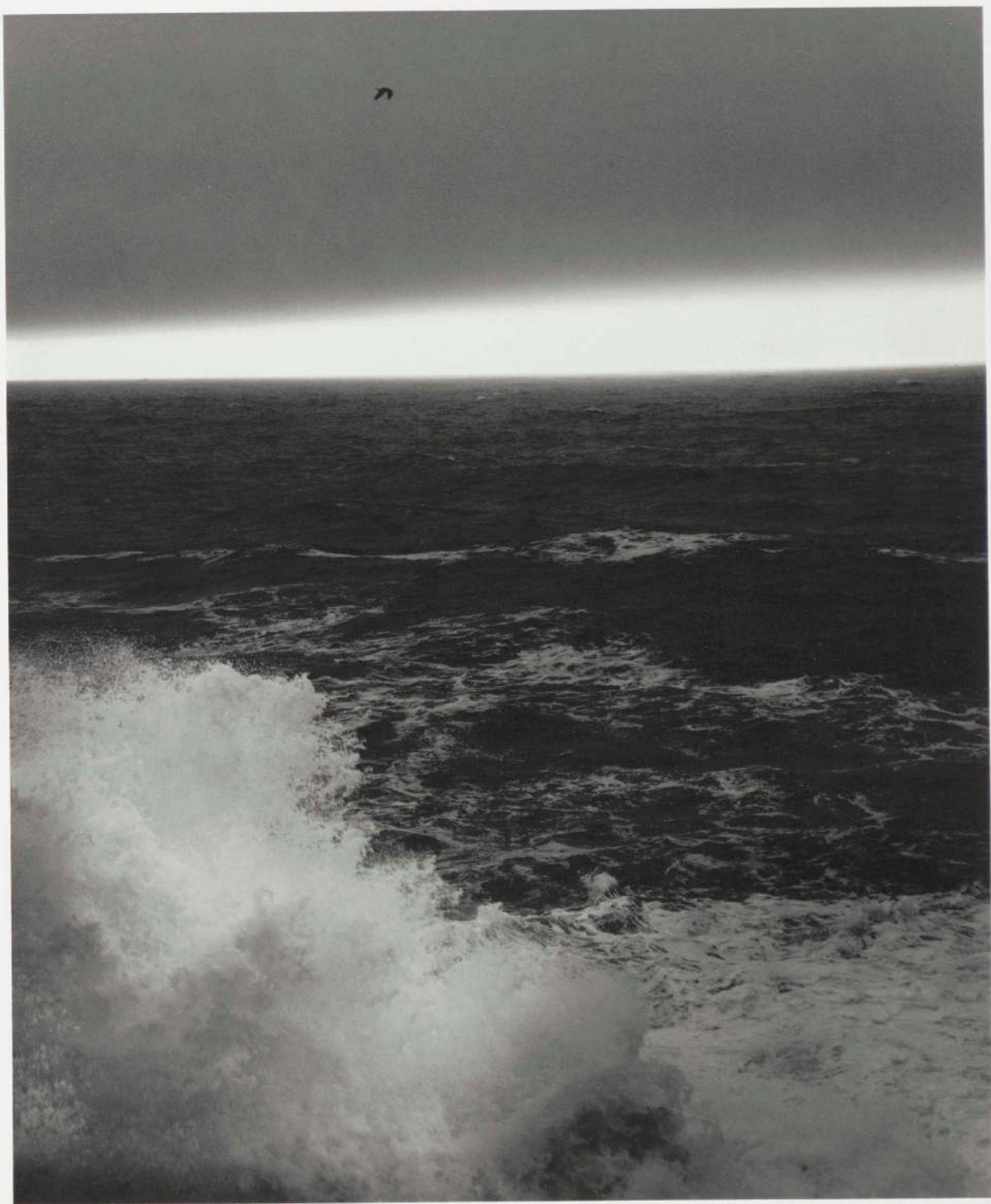
20. Navarro River, California  
1947





21. Stony Brook State Park, New York  
1960





22. Shore Acres, Oregon  
1960





23. Gallery Gully, Capitol Reef, Utah  
1963





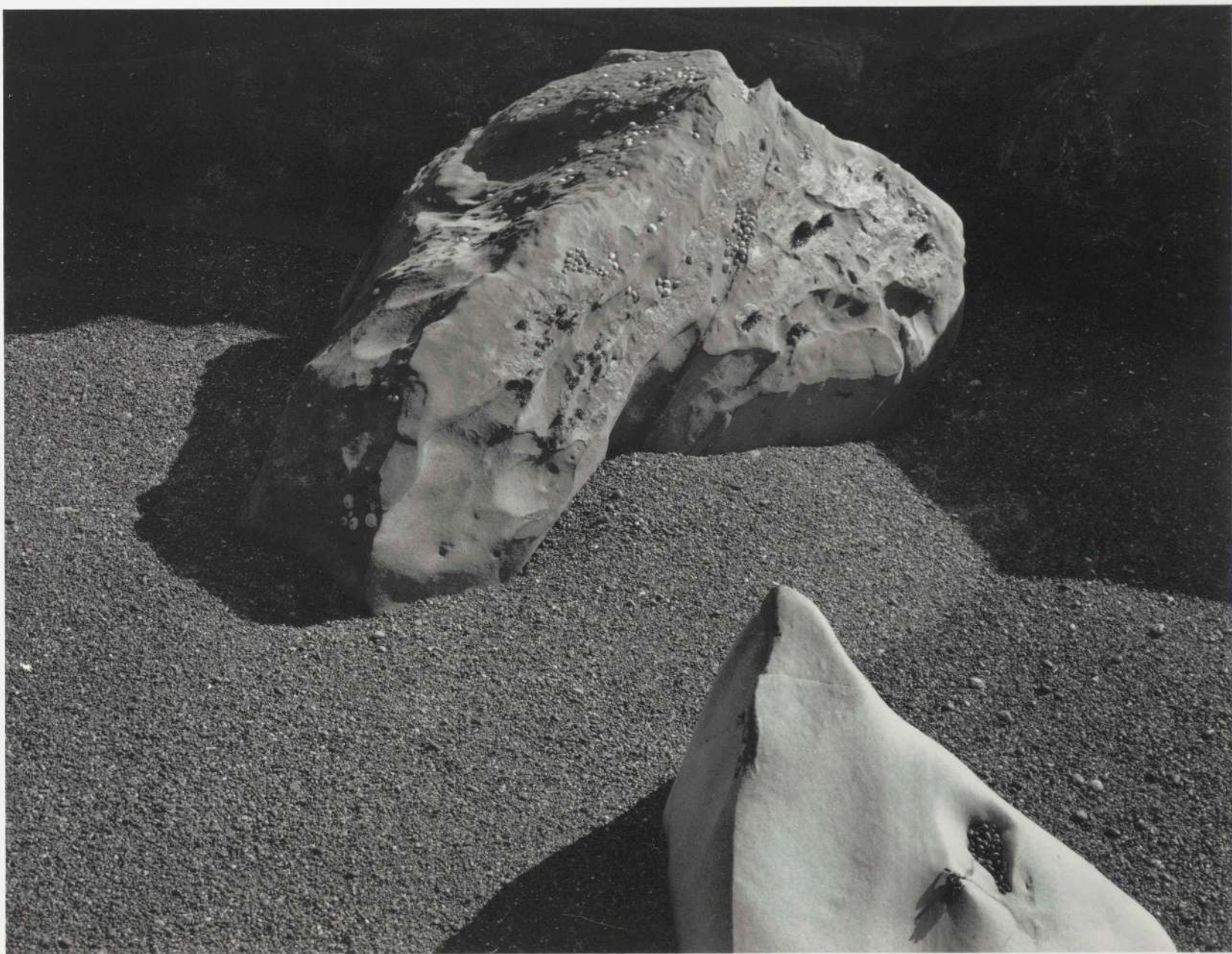
24. Navarro River, California  
1947



25. *Sculptured Birds*  
1964



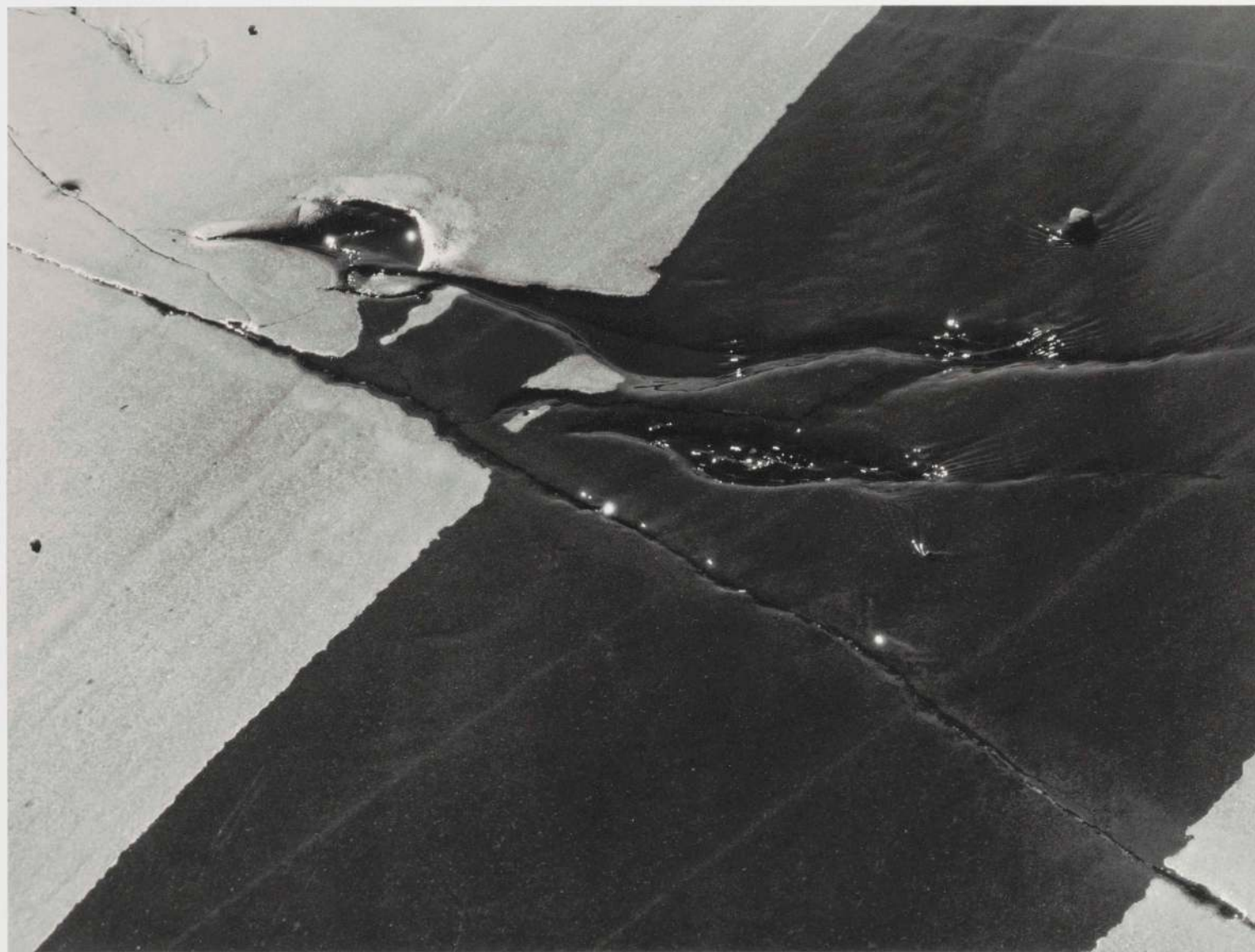




26. Gallery Cove, Point Lobos, California  
1948



27. Schoodic, Maine  
1969





28. Eel Creek, Oregon  
1966.







29. Barbara Spencer  
1940





30. Pavilion, New York  
1958





31. Market Street, San Francisco  
1950



32. Ernest Stones and Robert Bright  
1949







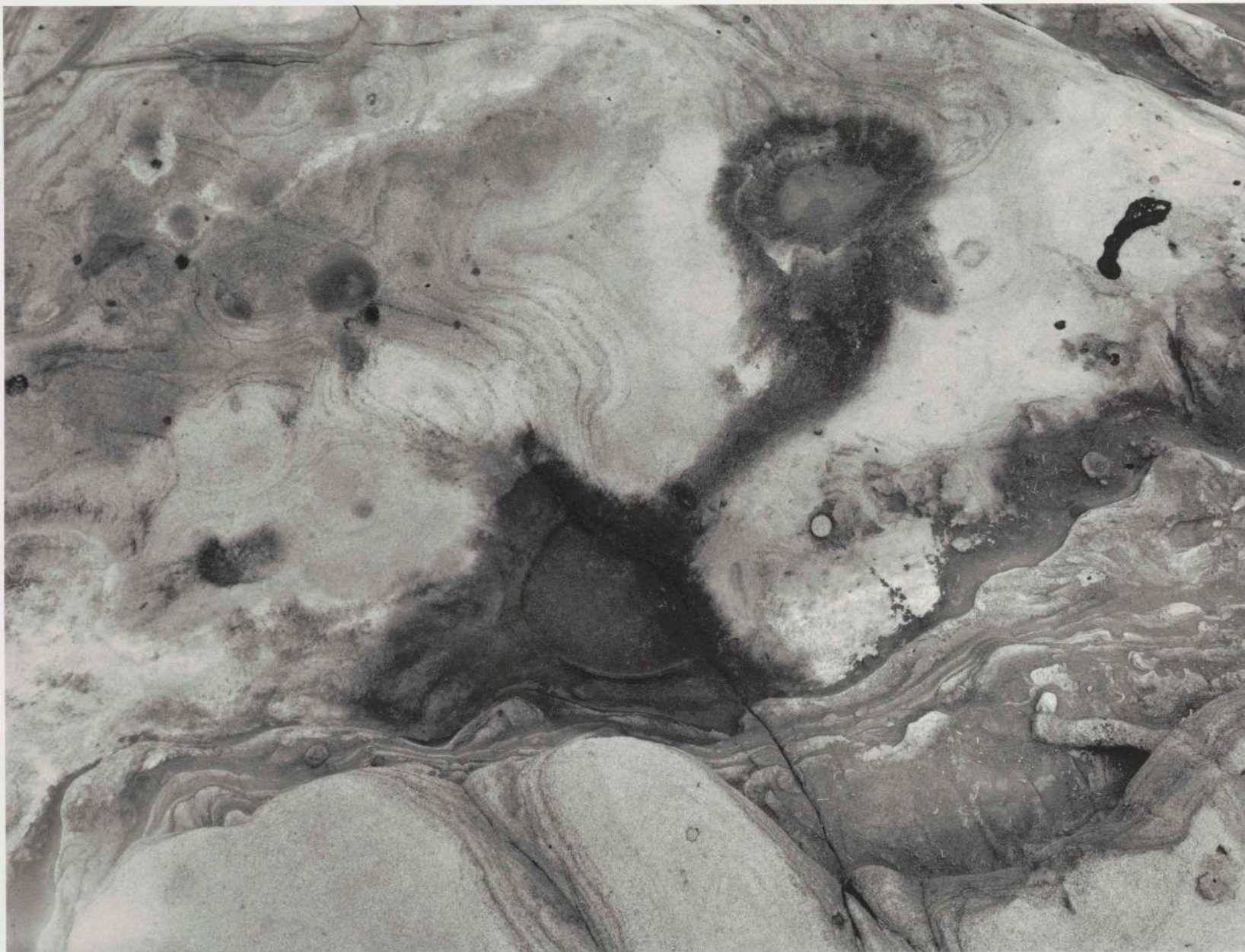
33. Warehouse Area, San Francisco  
1949





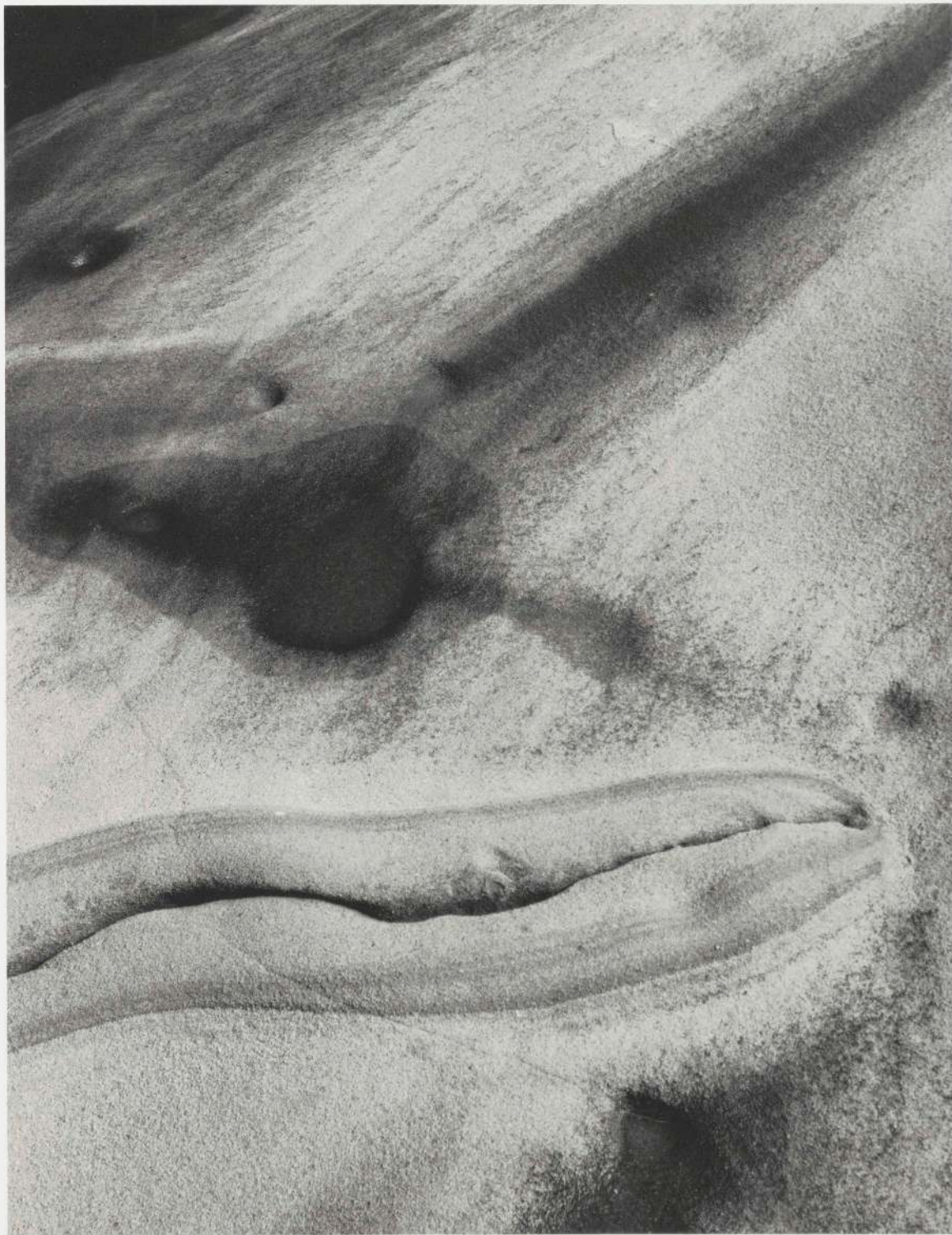
34. Mission District, San Francisco  
1949





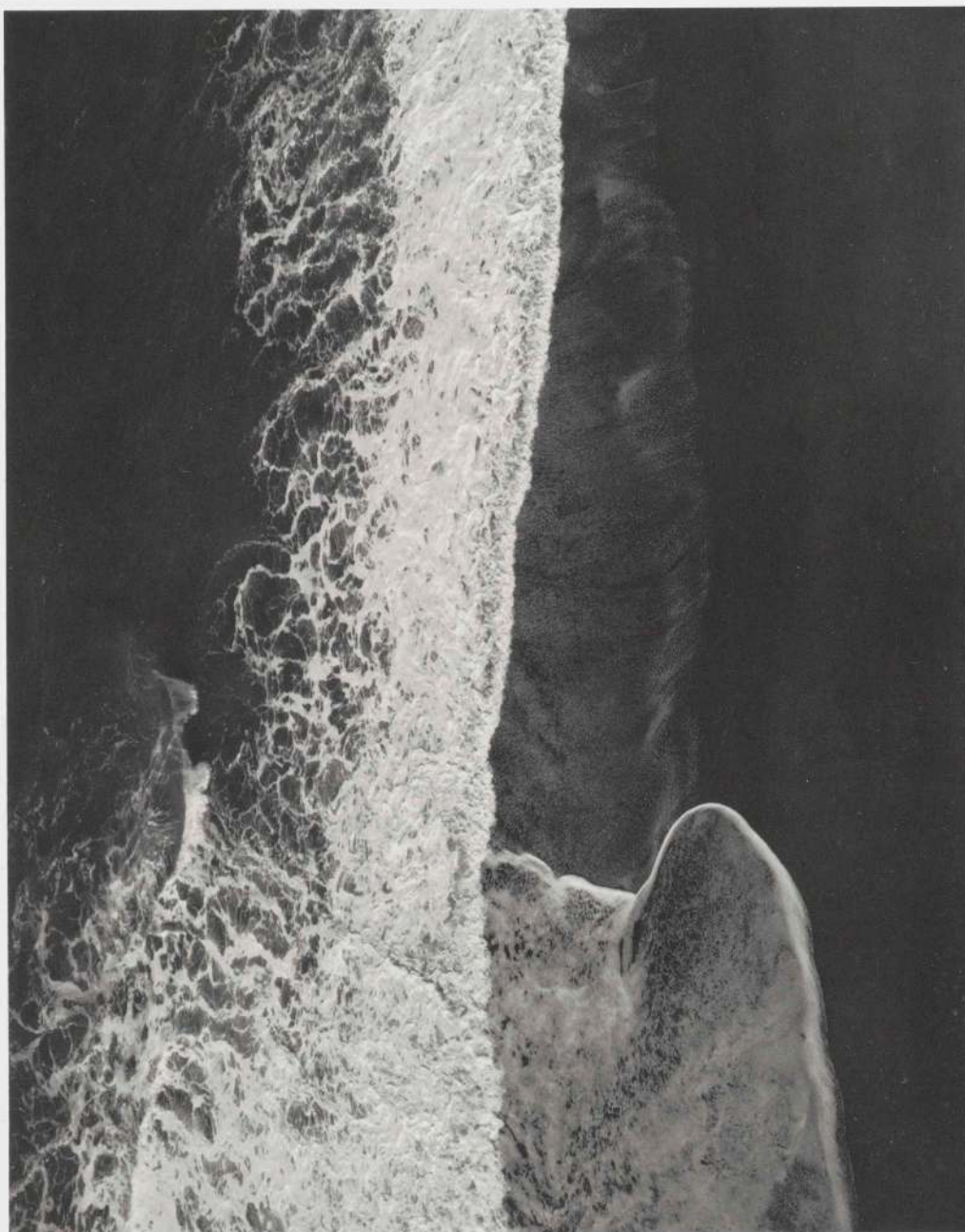
35. Weston Beach, Point Lobos, California  
1948





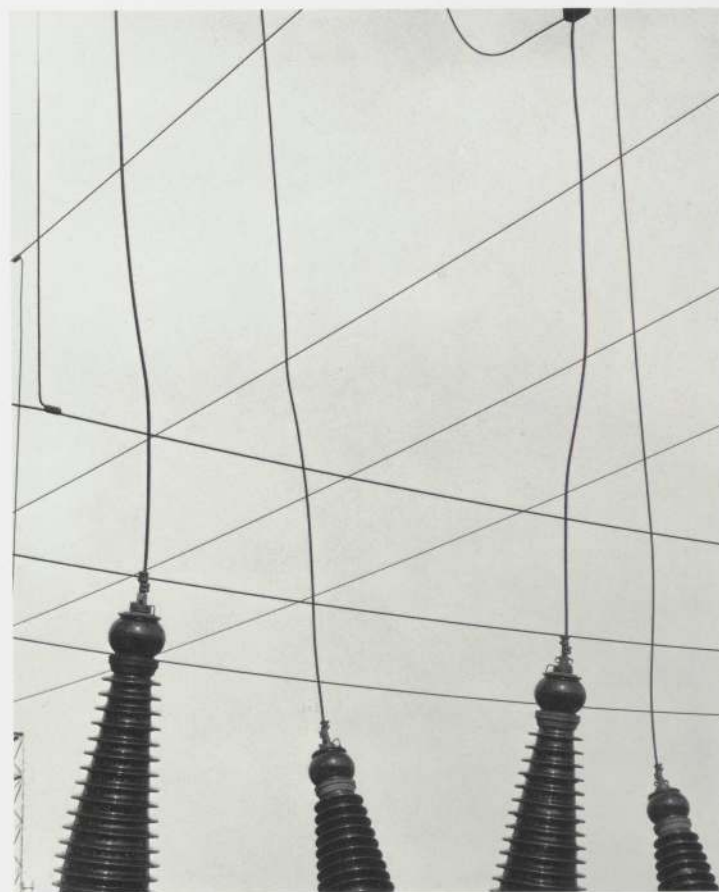
36. *Two Forms Moving Left & Right*  
1950





37. San Mateo County, California  
1947

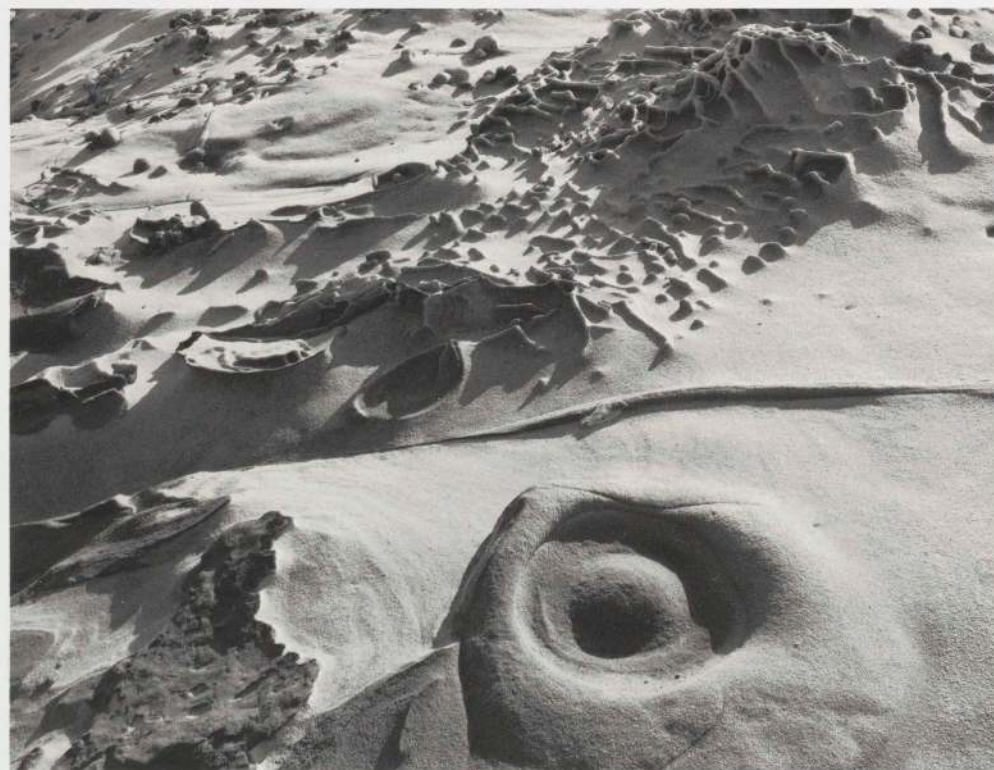






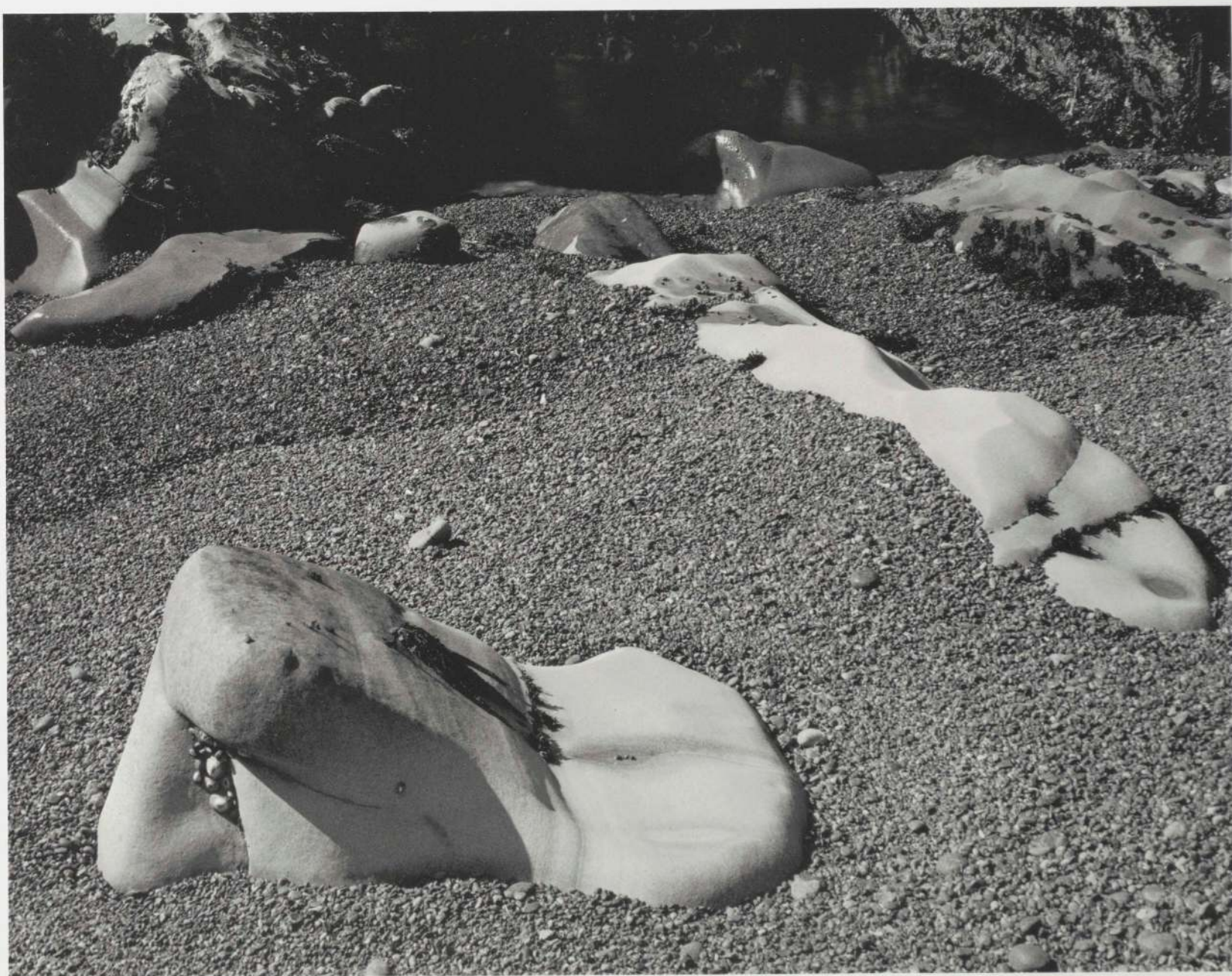


39. Point Lobos, California  
1950



40. Sandstone Eye Number 1  
1950





41. Gallery Cove, Point Lobos, California  
1948





42. Tom Murphy  
1948





43. Ponce, Puerto Rico  
1973



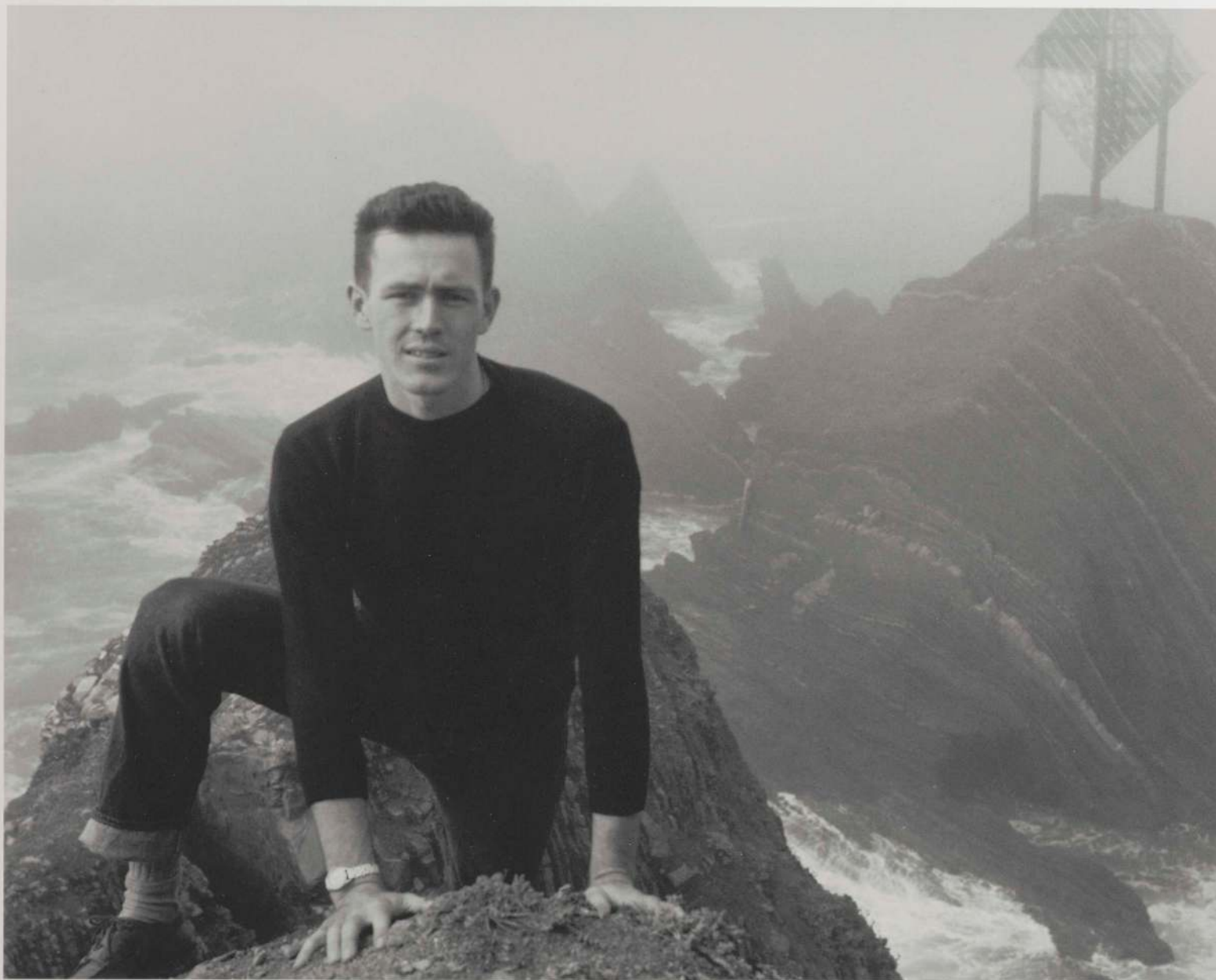






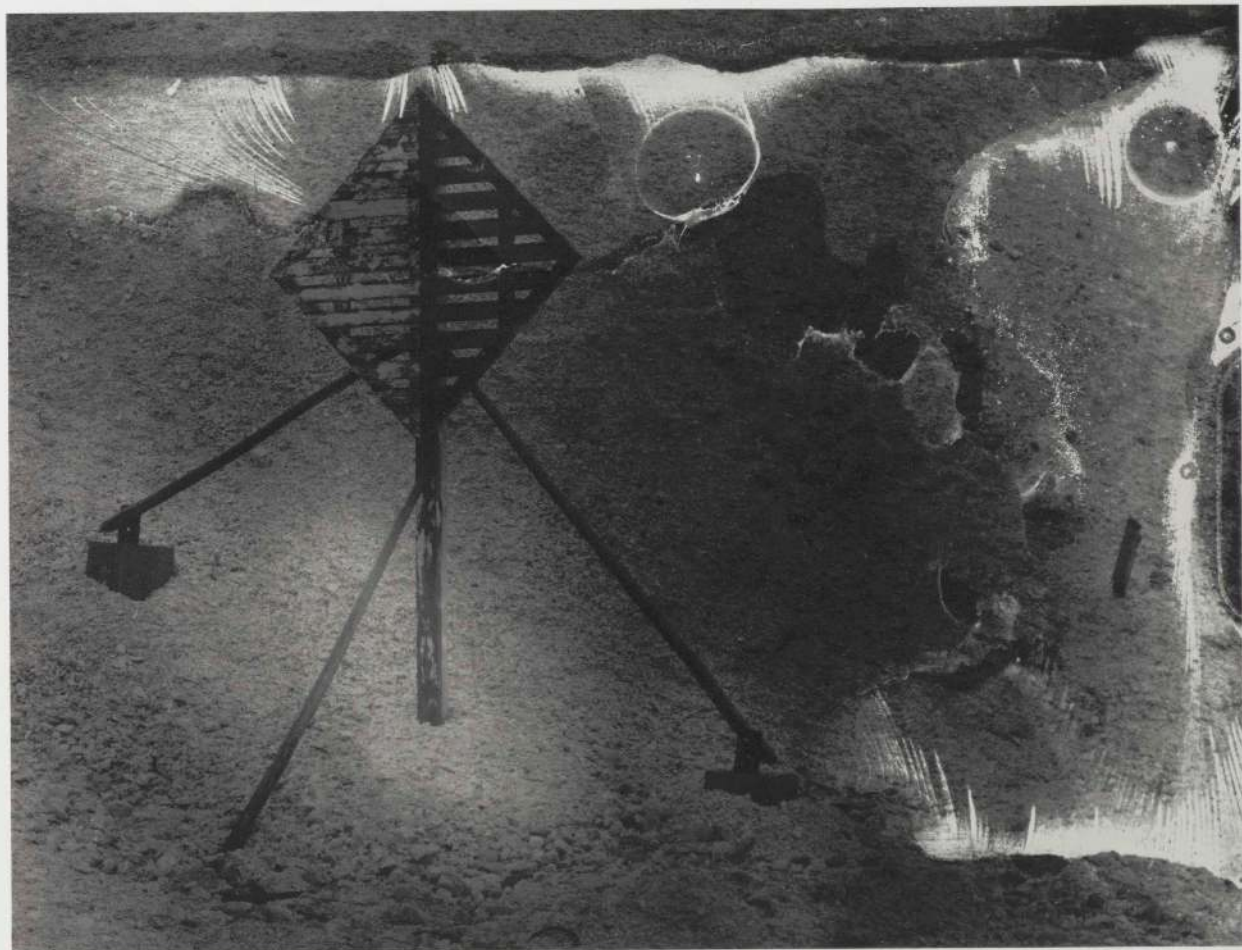
45. Vicinity of Capitol Reef, Utah  
1964





46. Robert Bright  
1947





47. Cape Breton, Nova Scotia  
1970





48. *Autumn Solstice*  
1961





49. *Empty Head*  
1962





50. Drid Williams  
1962





51. China Basin, San Francisco  
1973





52. Tom Murphy  
1948





53. 72 N. Union Street, Rochester  
1960









54. Cedar and Laguna Streets, San Francisco  
1948

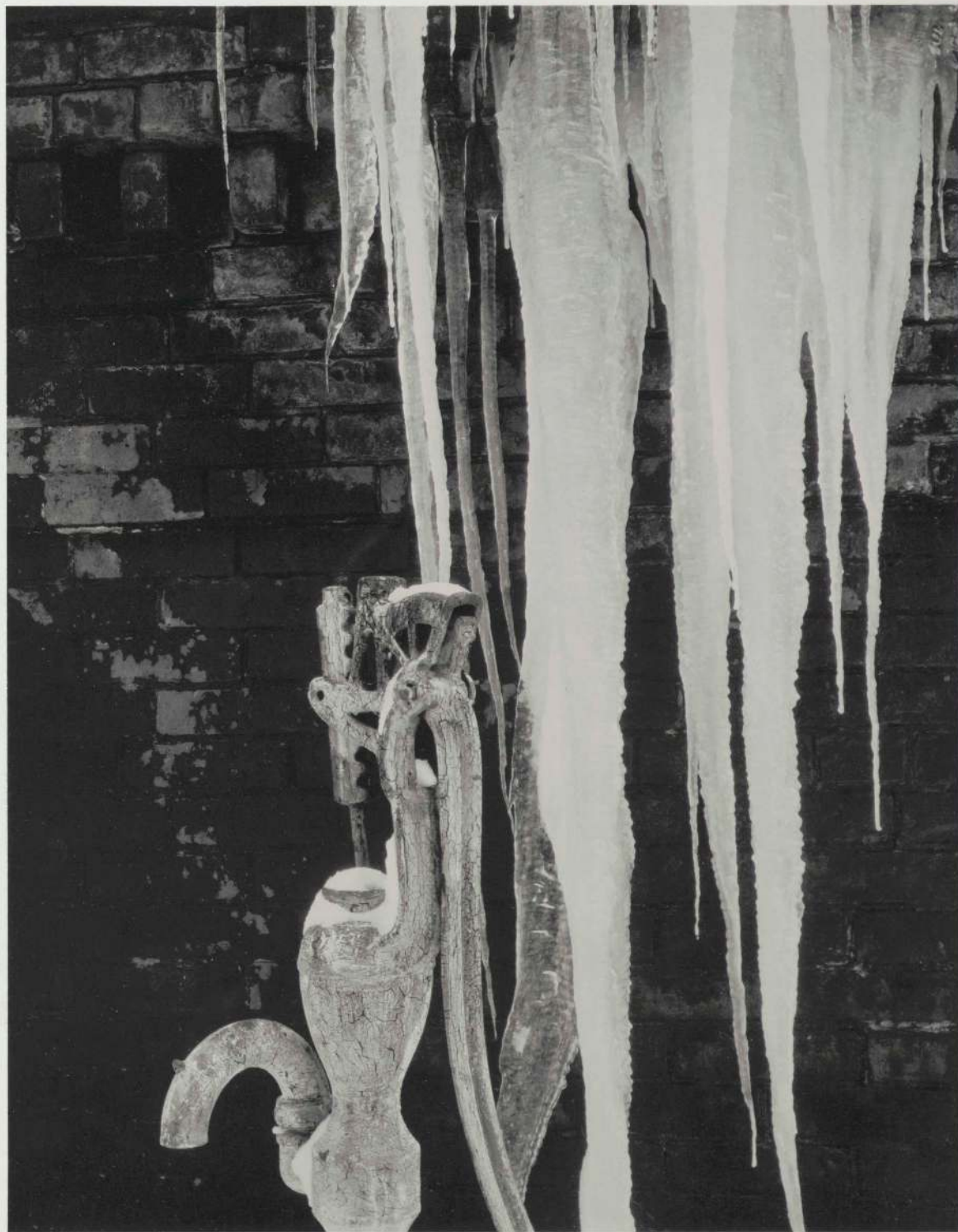




55. *Self Portrait*  
1957



36. 72 N. Union Street, Rochester  
1958







57. Rye Beach, New Hampshire  
1966



58. Capitol Reef, Utah  
1962







59. Henry Mountains, Utah  
1966





60. Grande Ronde Valley, Oregon  
1940





61. Shore Acres, Oregon  
1960





62. Boundary Mountain, Benton, California  
1959



63. Water Street, Portland  
1940





64. S.W. Front Avenue, Portland  
1940







65. Post and Webster Streets, San Francisco  
1949





66. Bush Street, San Francisco  
1950



67. 1412 Webster Street, San Francisco  
1948



68. Haymarket, Boston  
1975







69. Benicia, California  
1948



70. Piazza Navona, Rome, Italy  
1974







71. Sansome and California Streets, San Francisco  
1949





72. Chinatown, San Francisco  
1953



73. Powell and Market Streets, San Francisco  
1953















76. *Little Girl Found*  
1949





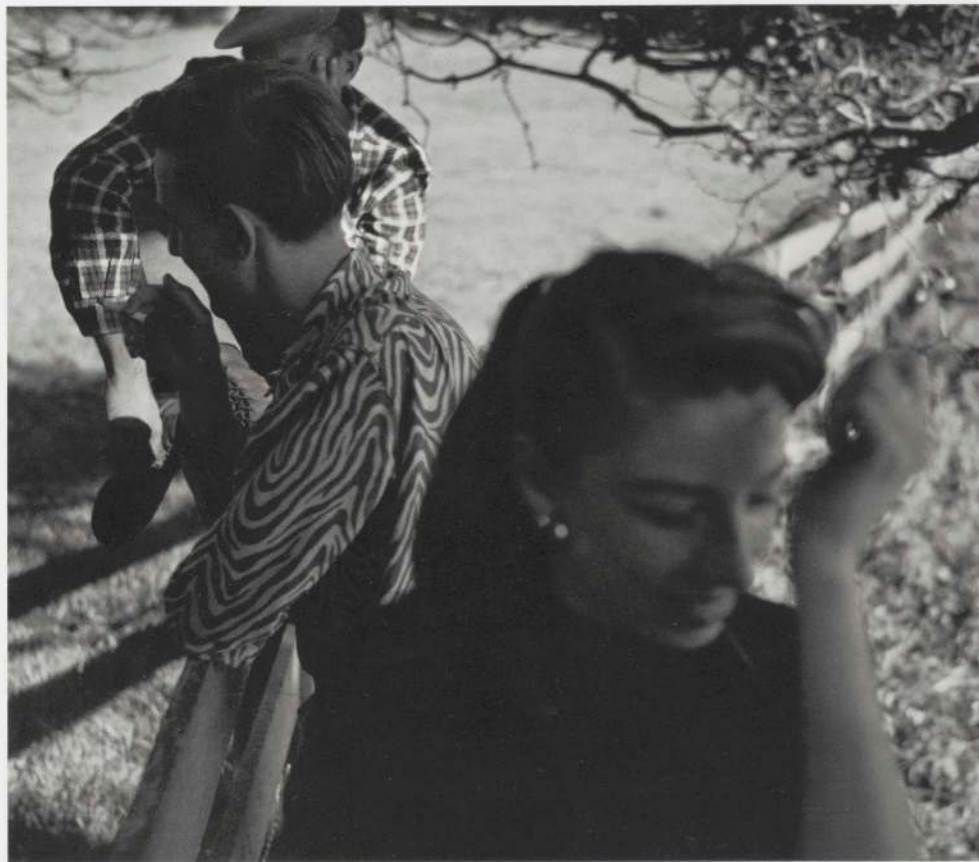
77. McAllister Street, San Francisco  
1950







79. Barbara Zrnich  
1951





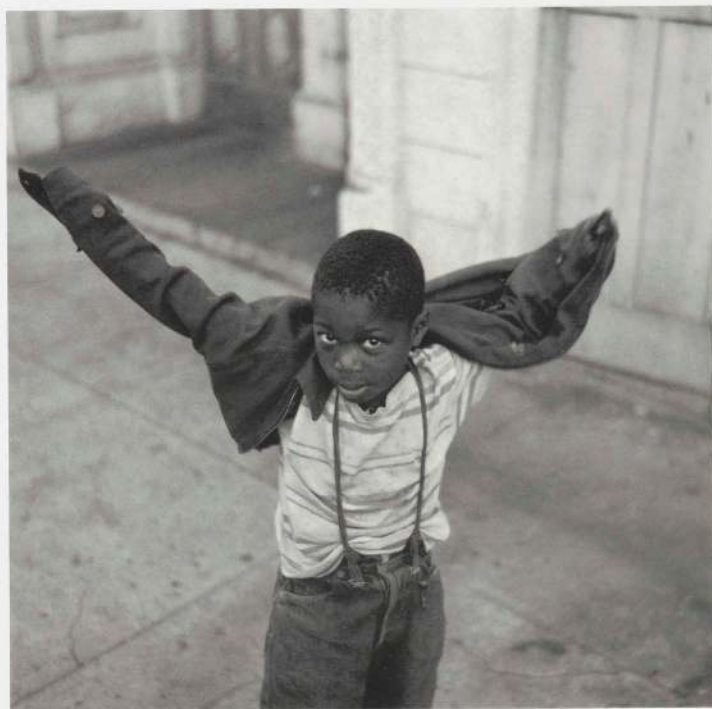
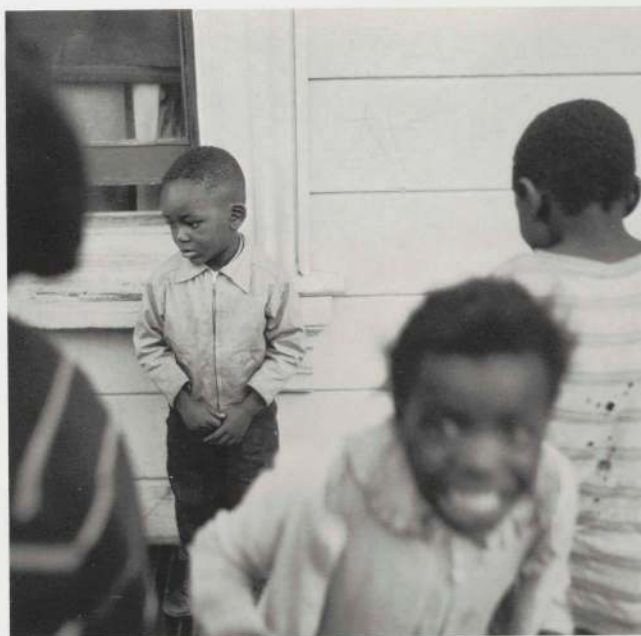
80. Chinatown, San Francisco  
1950





81. Fillmore District, San Francisco  
1949

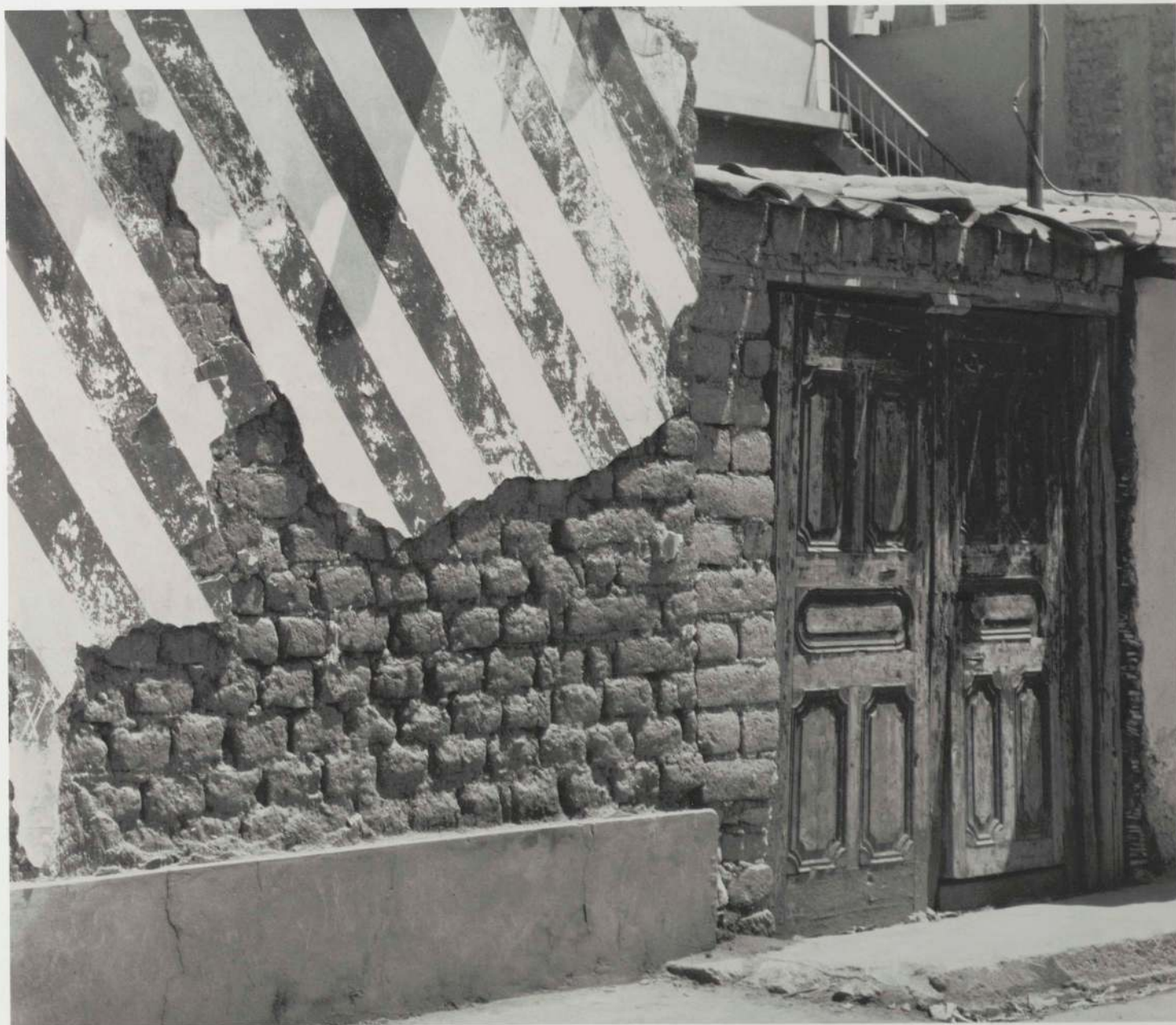
82. Fillmore District, San Francisco  
1949





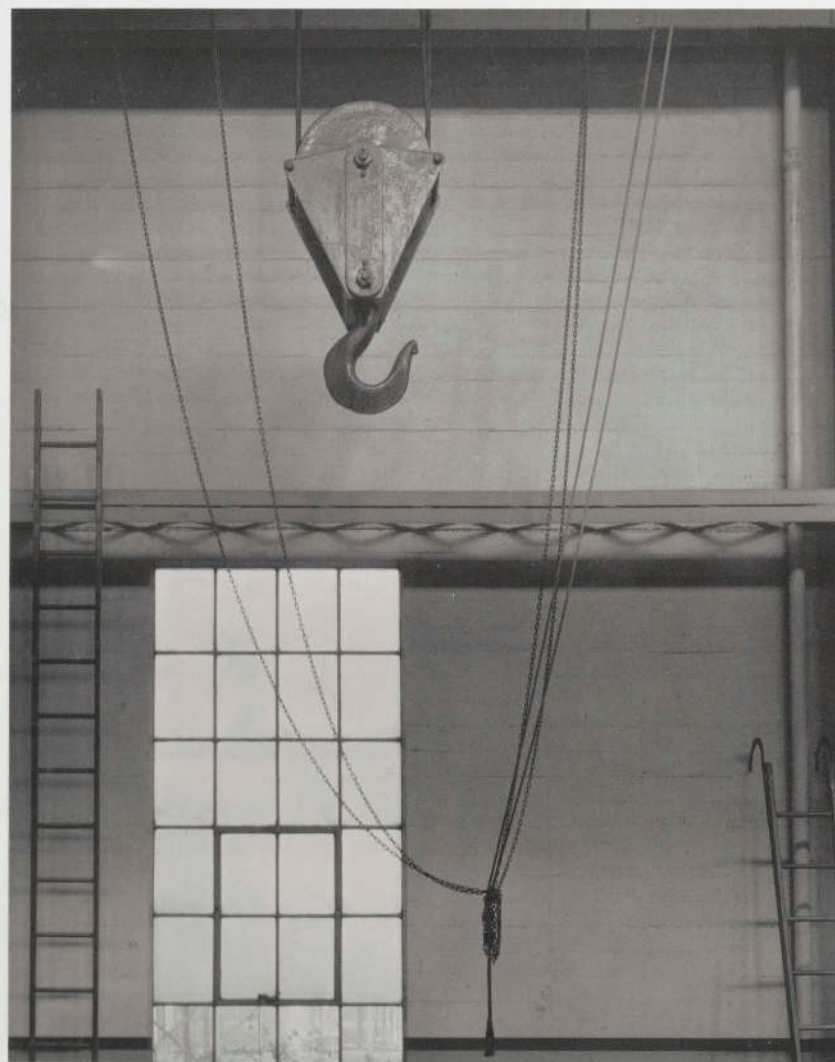






84. Huraz, Peru  
1973

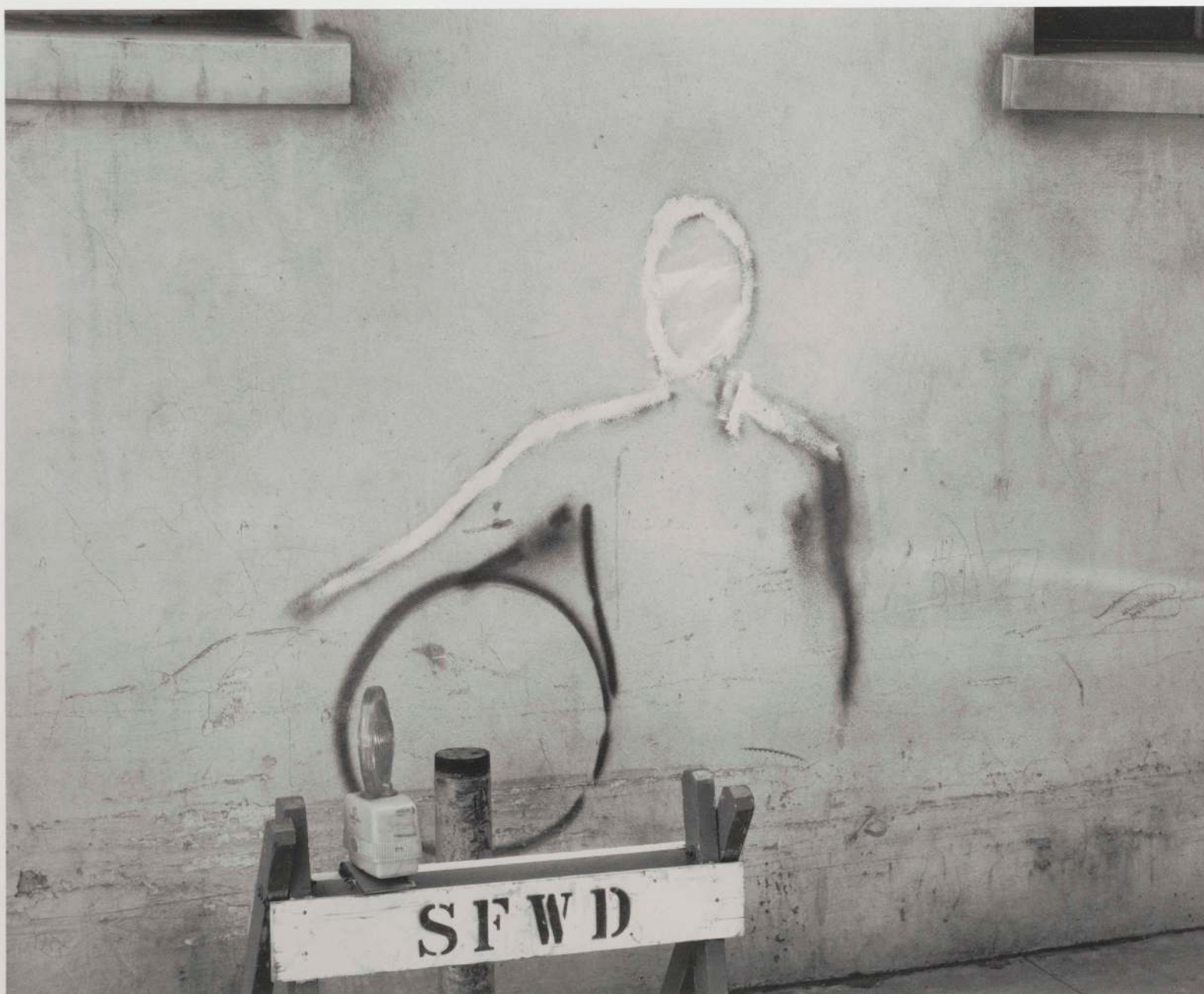












87. Chinatown, San Francisco  
1973





88. Columbus Avenue, San Francisco  
1949





89. Rochester  
1954





90. Steamboat Lake, Oregon  
1941

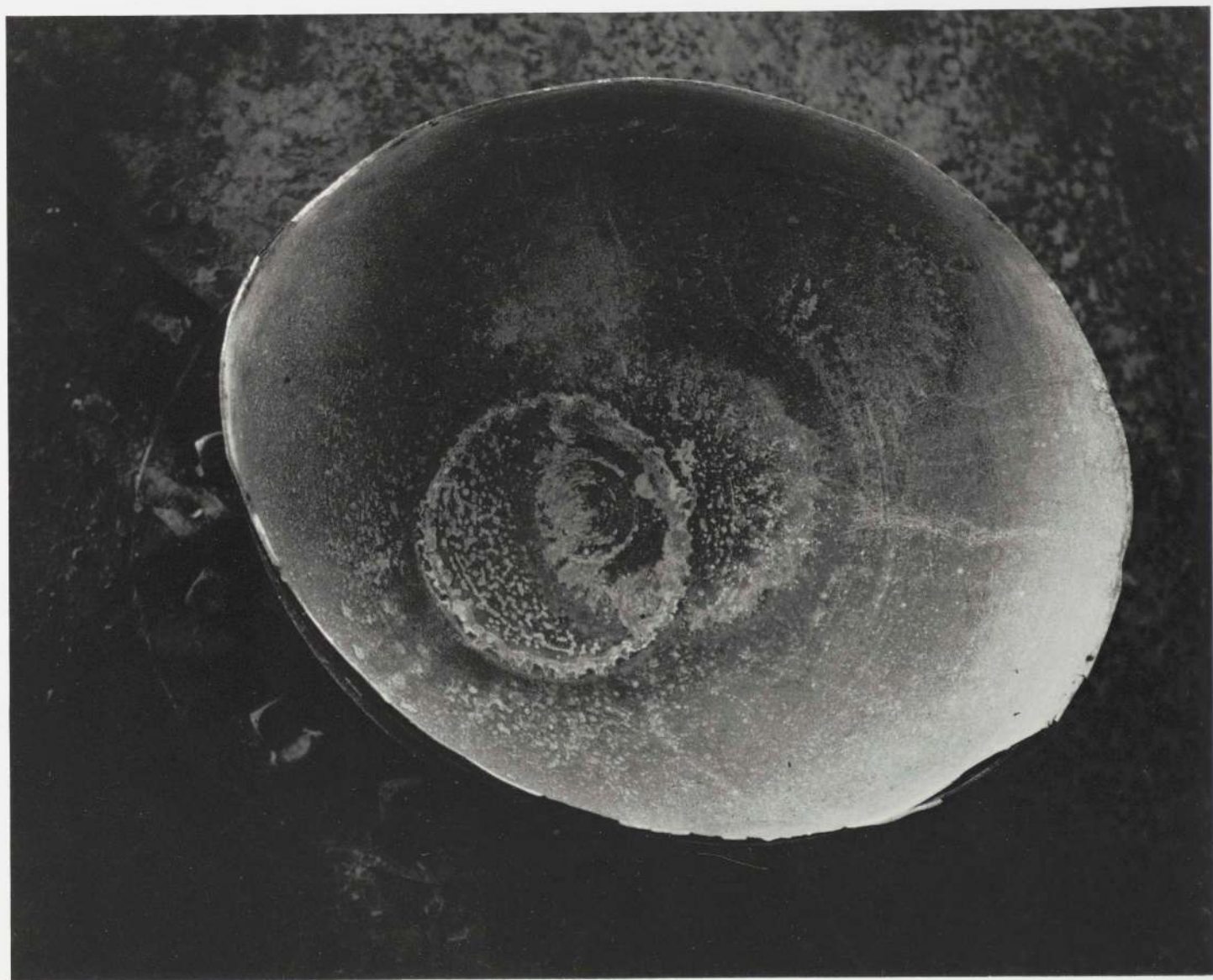




91. Cabbage Hill, Oregon  
1941



92. *The Sound of One Hand Clapping*  
1957







93. Bean Hollow State Park, California  
1959





94. Capitol Reef, Utah  
1961



95. William LaRue  
1960







96. *For Edward Weston*  
1958





97. North Wall Beach, Point Lobos, California  
1949



98. Chatham Street, Boston  
1969

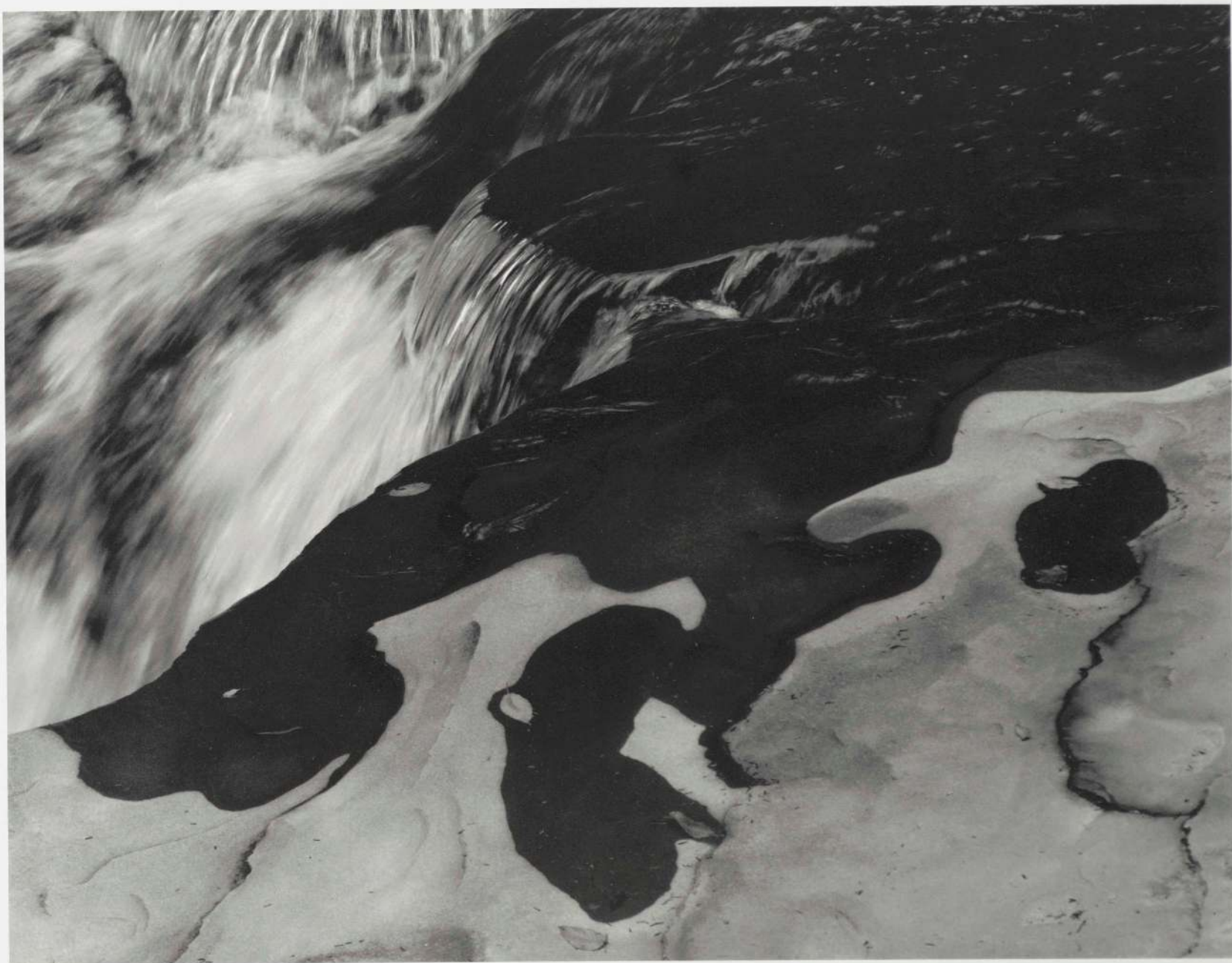






99. North Wall, Point Lobos, California  
1946









101. Goblin Valley Road, San Rafael Desert, Utah  
1964.



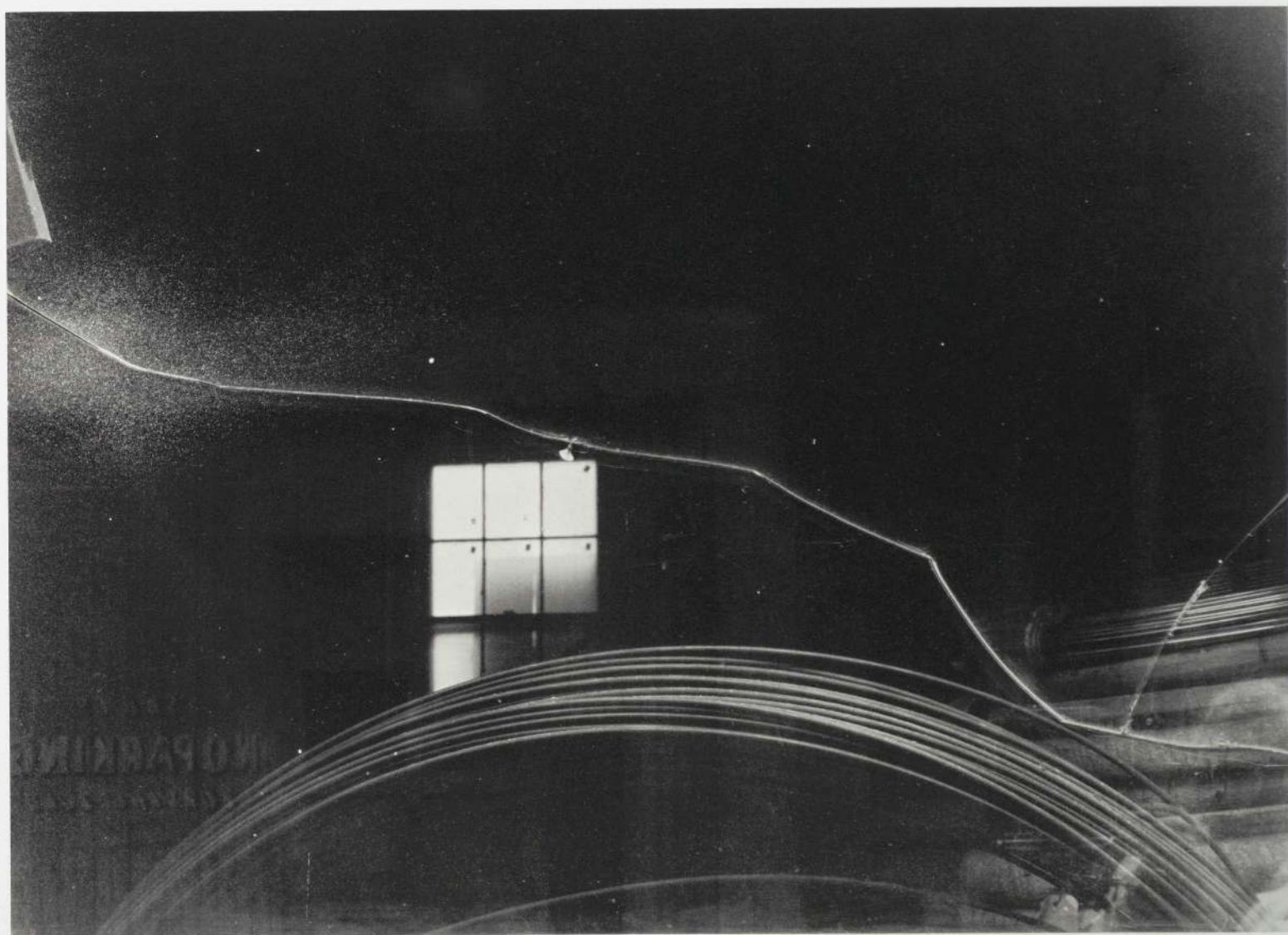


102. Lincoln, Vermont  
1968













105. Aquatic Park, San Francisco  
1949



106. Chinatown, San Francisco  
1953







107. Portland  
1938





108. Haymarket, Boston  
1974



109. Kamm Building, S.W. Front Avenue, Portland  
1939







110. West 53d Street, New York City  
1946





III. Lake Road, Rochester  
1957



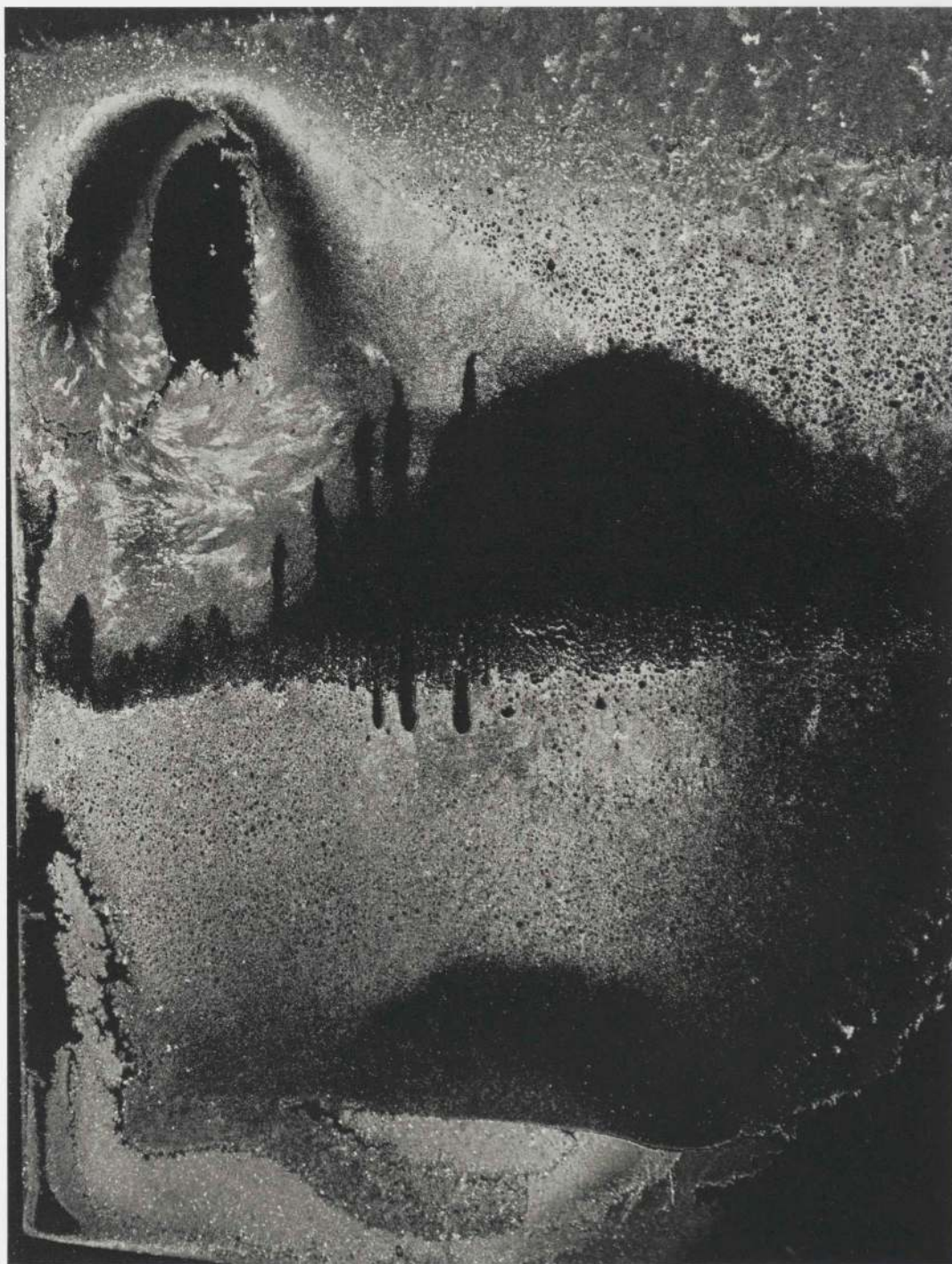


112. 72 N. Union Street, Rochester  
1956



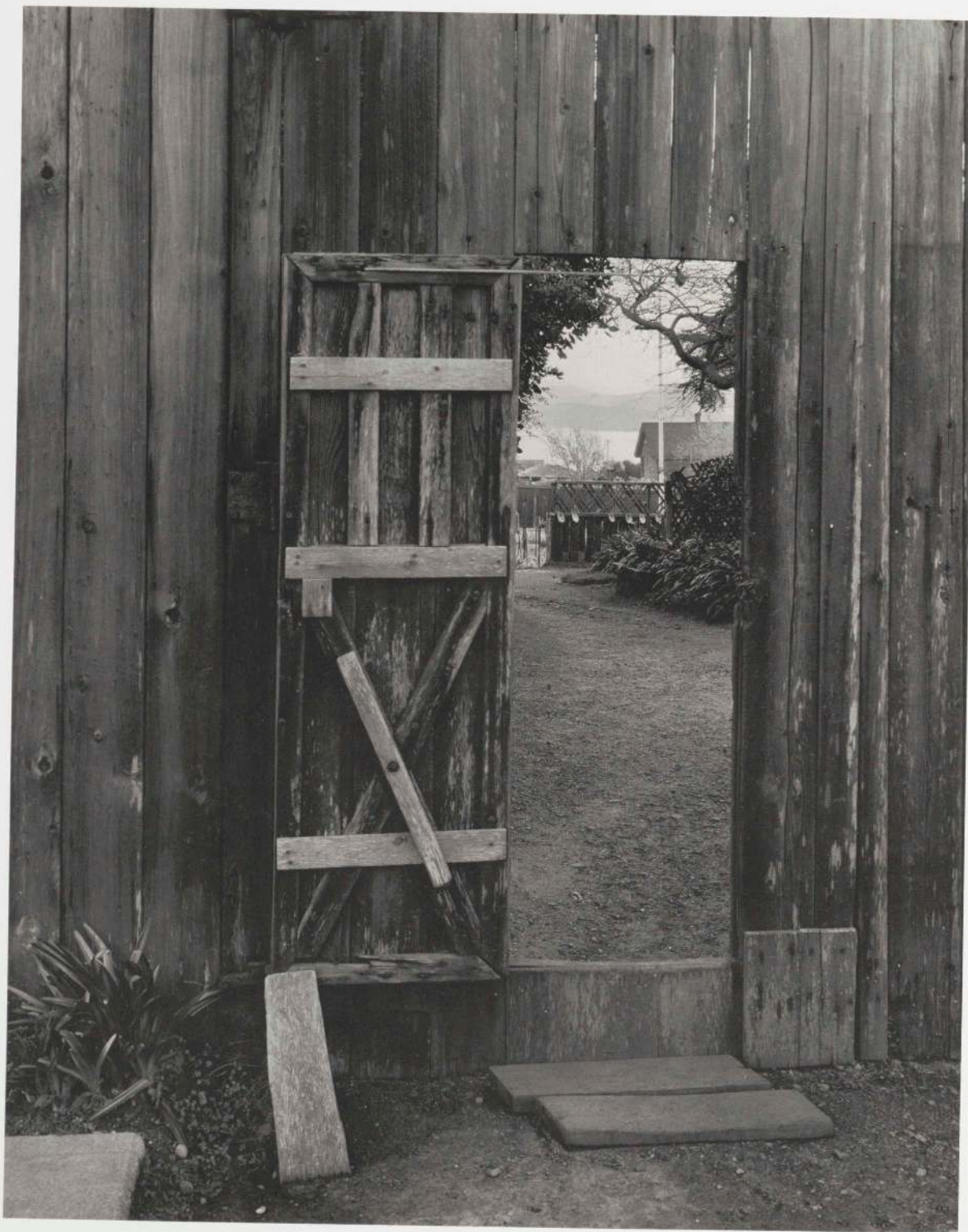






113. *Dumb Face*  
1959





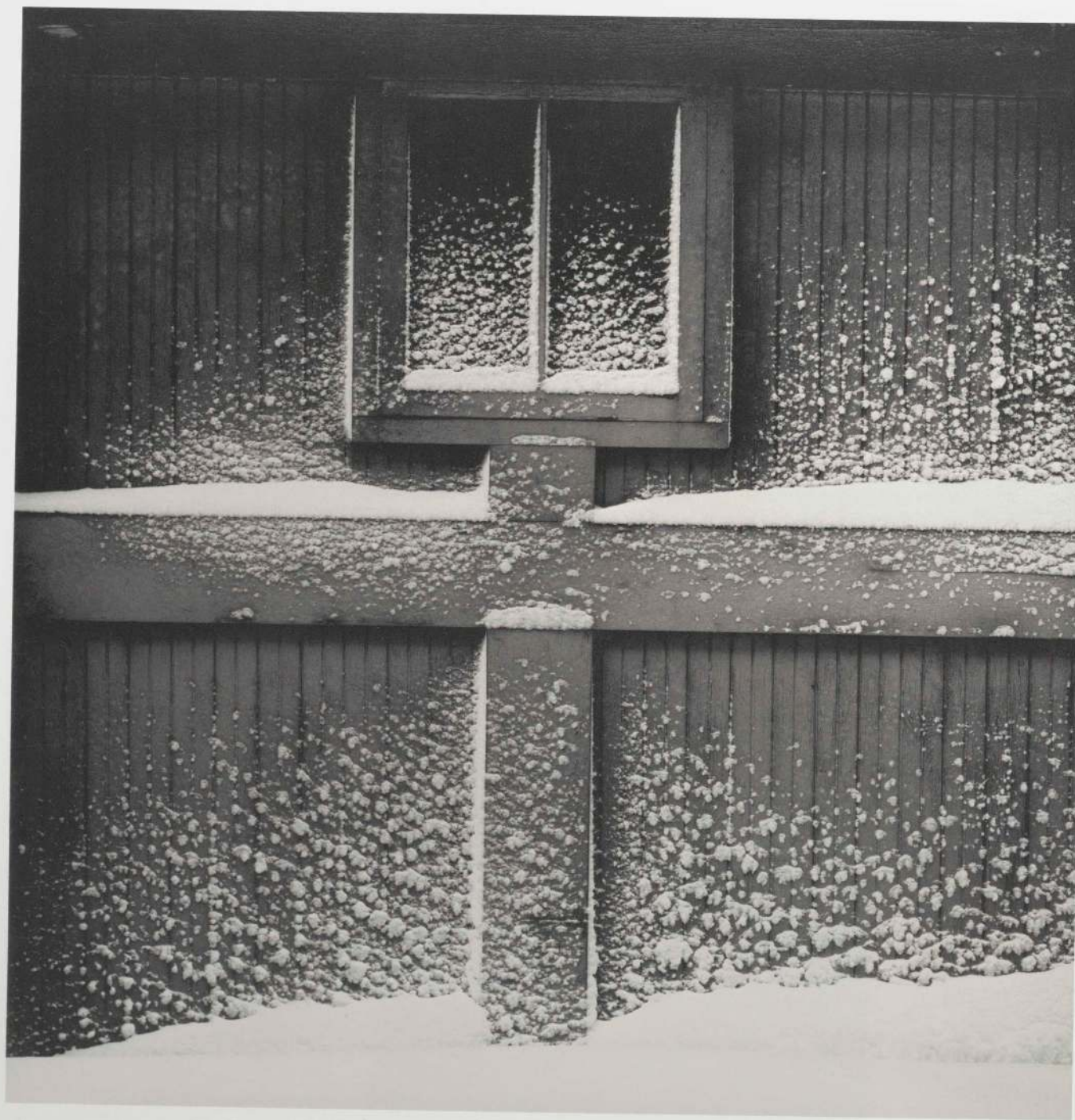
114. Mendocino, California  
1947





115. Vicinity of Naples, New York  
1953





116. Haags Alley, Rochester  
1960



117. Ladd and Tilton Building, S.W. Front Avenue, Portland  
1939

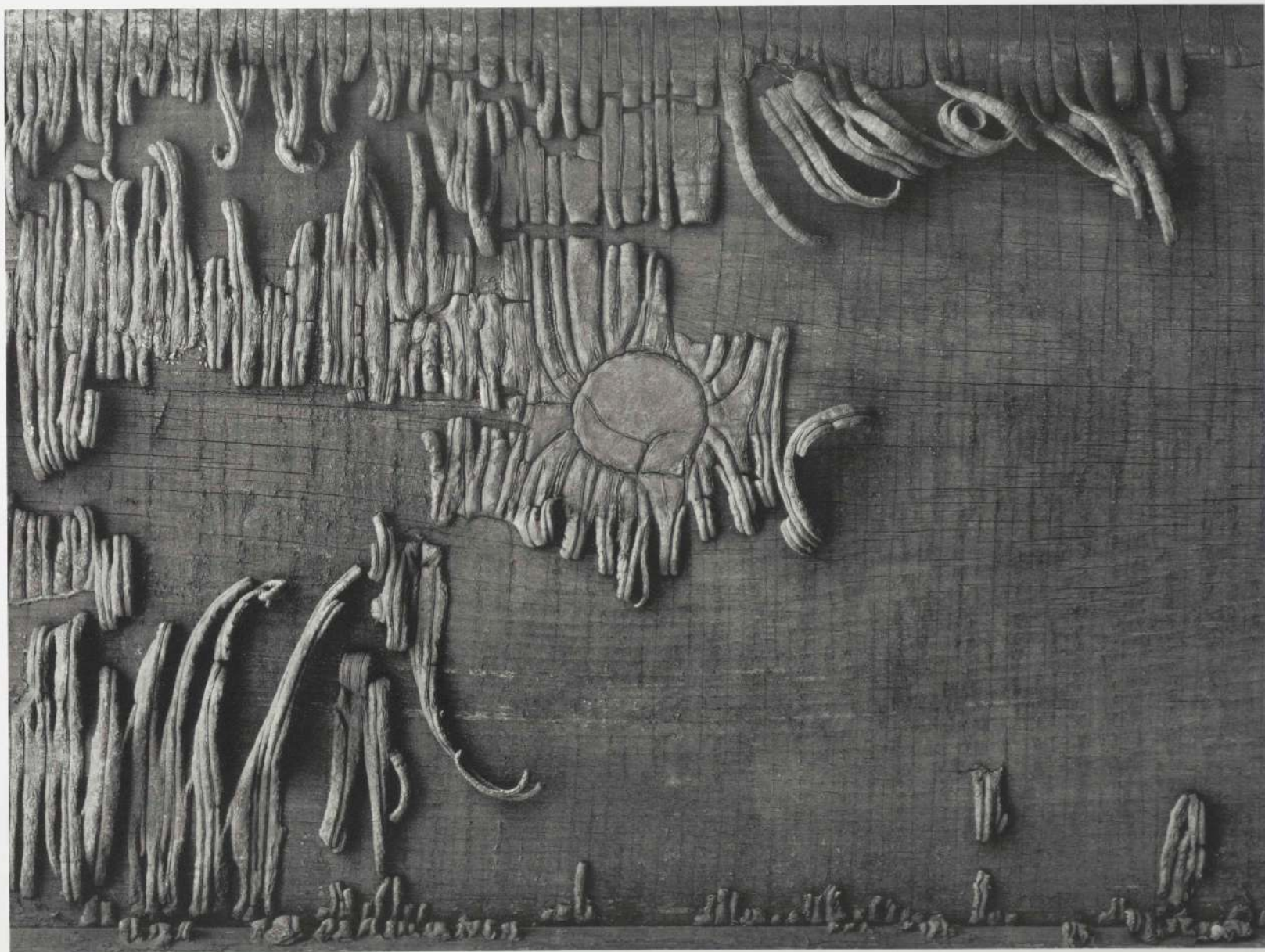




118. Front Street, San Francisco  
1951







119. Rochester Junction, New York  
1959





120. Devil's Slide, San Mateo County, California  
1948





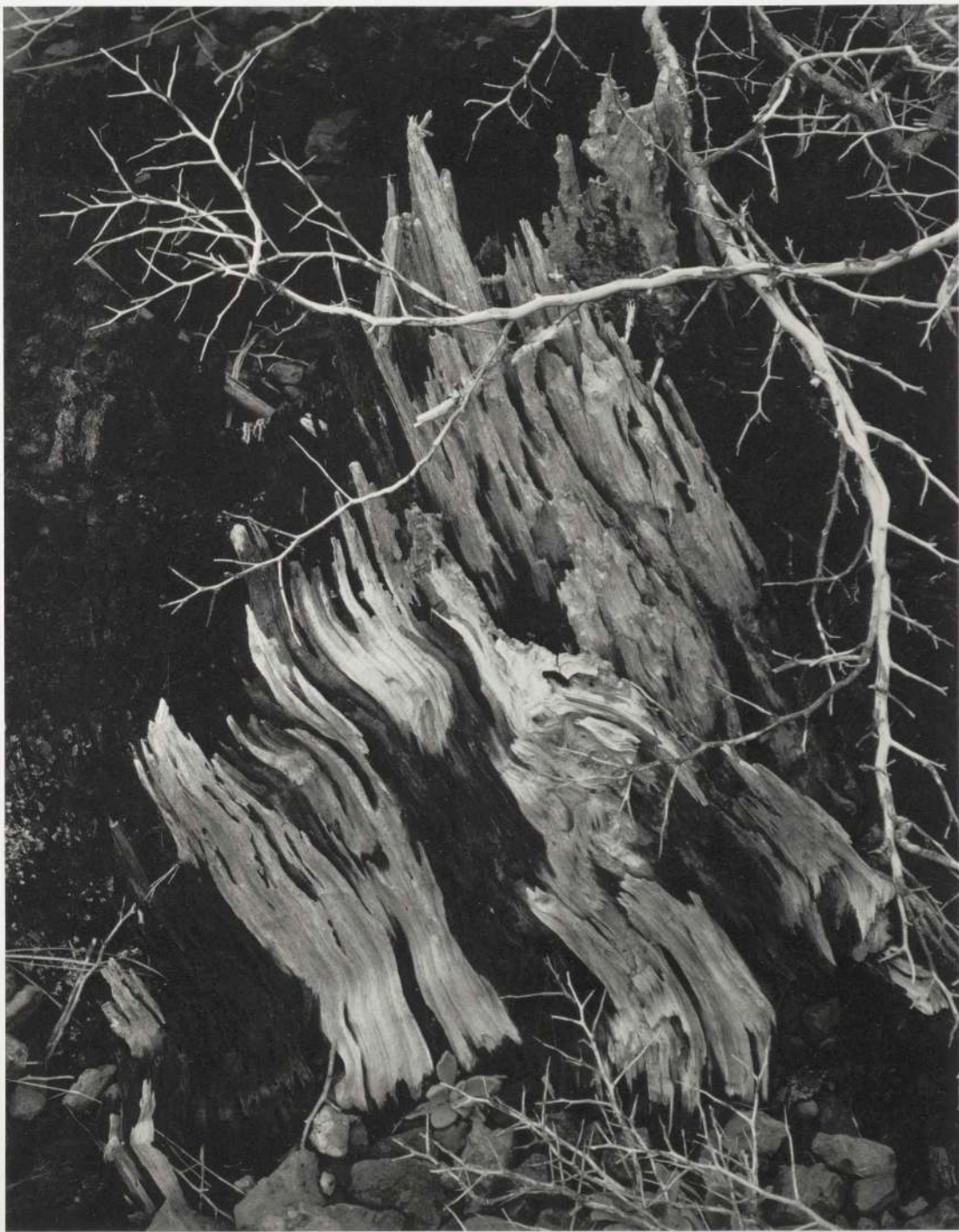
121. Vicinity of Naples, New York  
1955





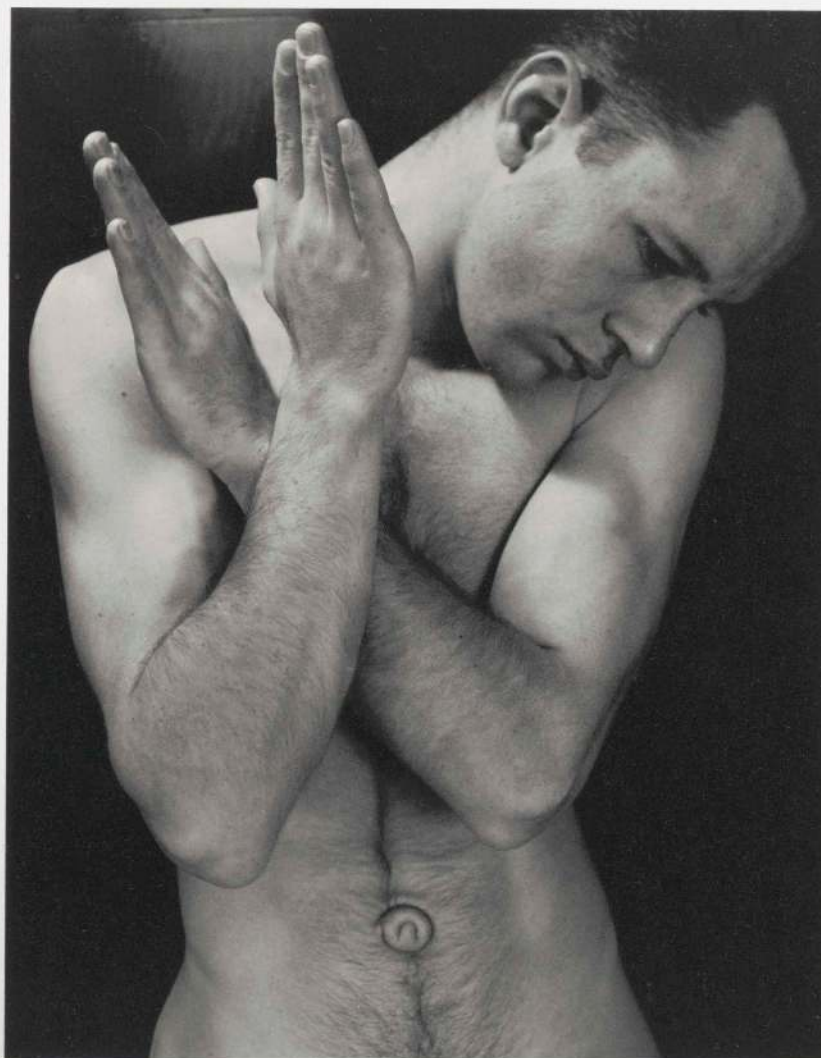
122. *Resurrection*  
1951

123. Vicinity of Lostine Creek, Oregon  
1941



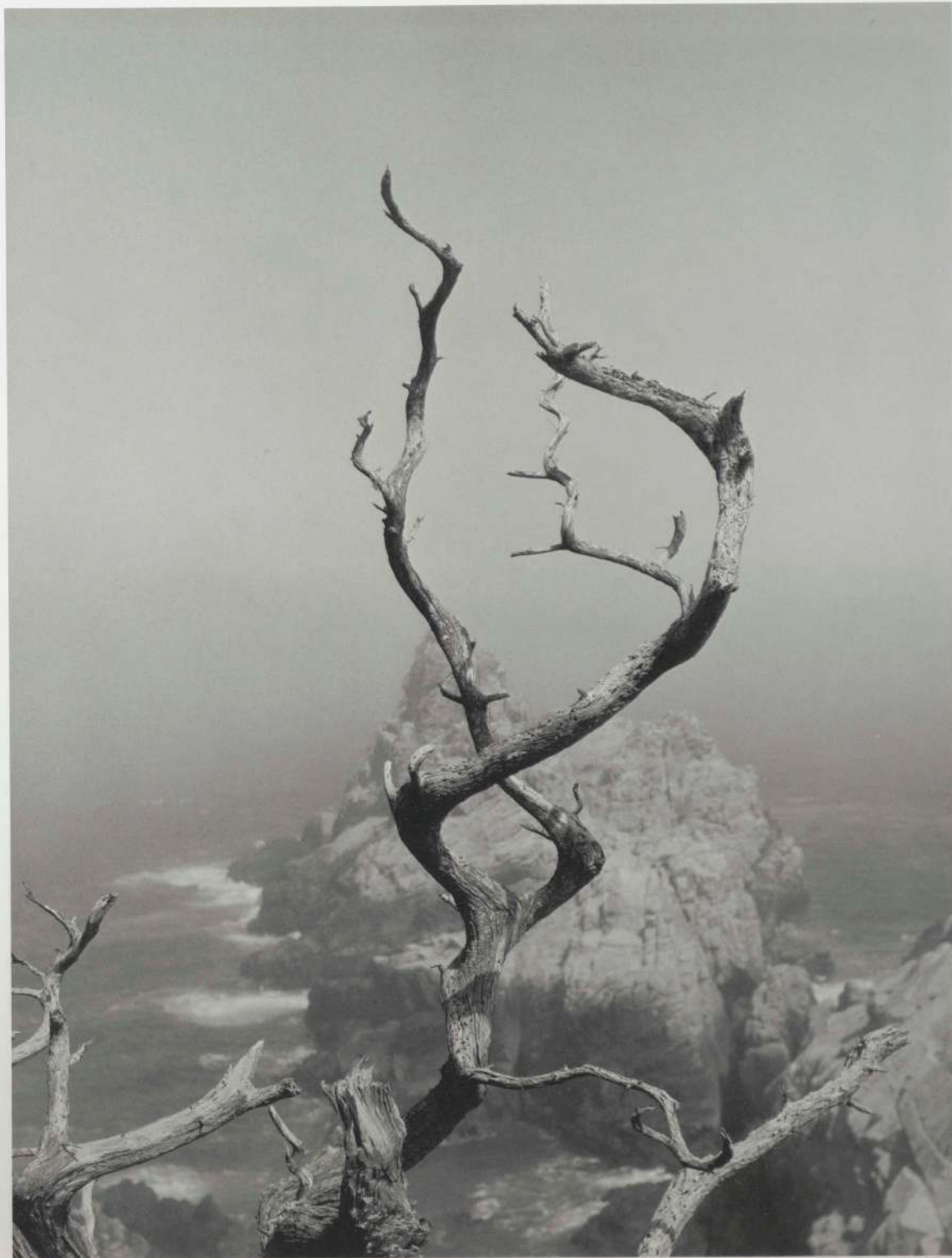
124. Lake Almanar, California  
1947



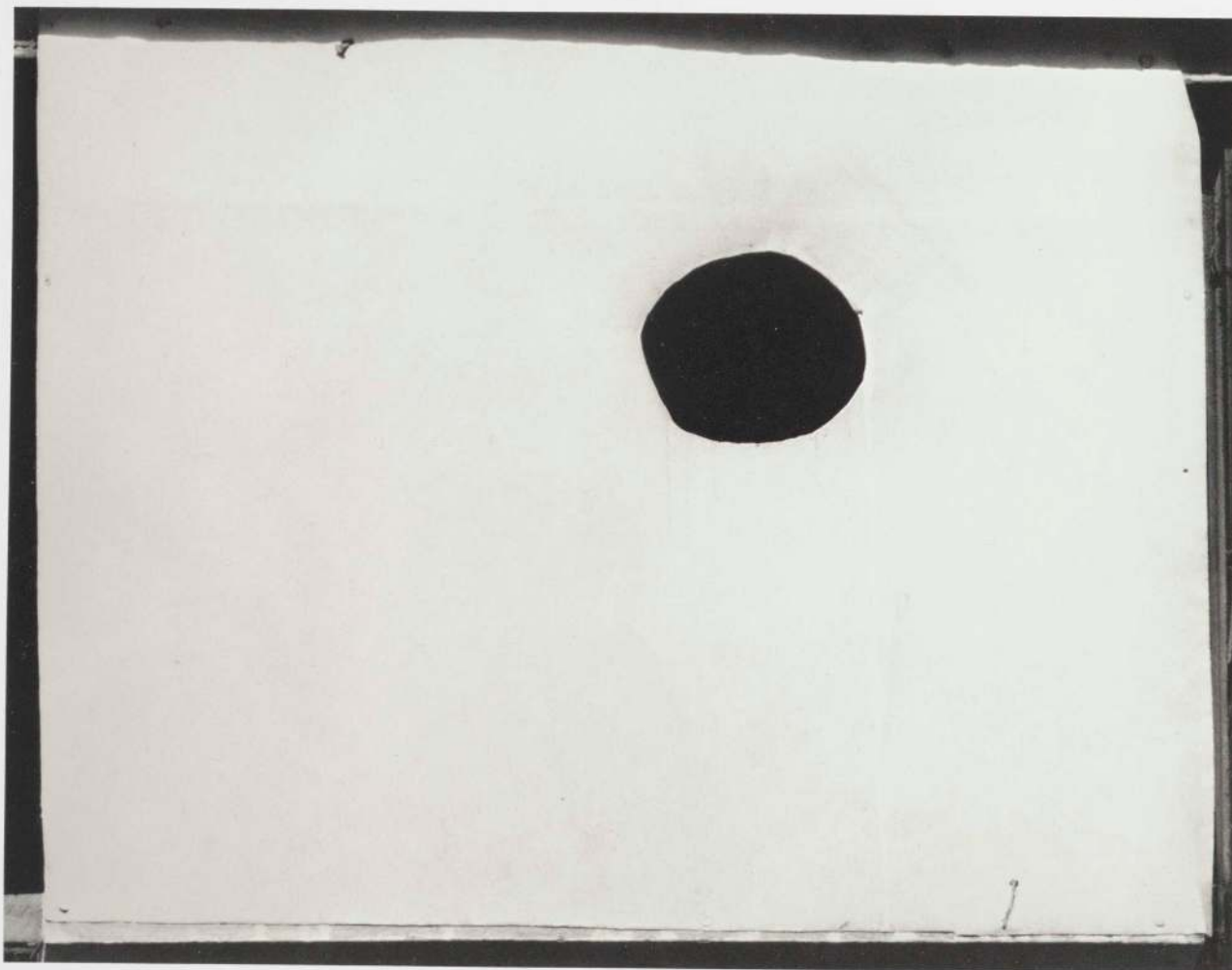


125. Tom Murphy  
1948

126. Cypress Grove Trail, Point Lobos, California  
1951







127. University Avenue, Rochester  
1959

128. *Black Sun*  
1955







129. William Smith  
1957



130. 72 N. Union Street, Rochester  
1958





131. *Moment of Revelation*  
1951

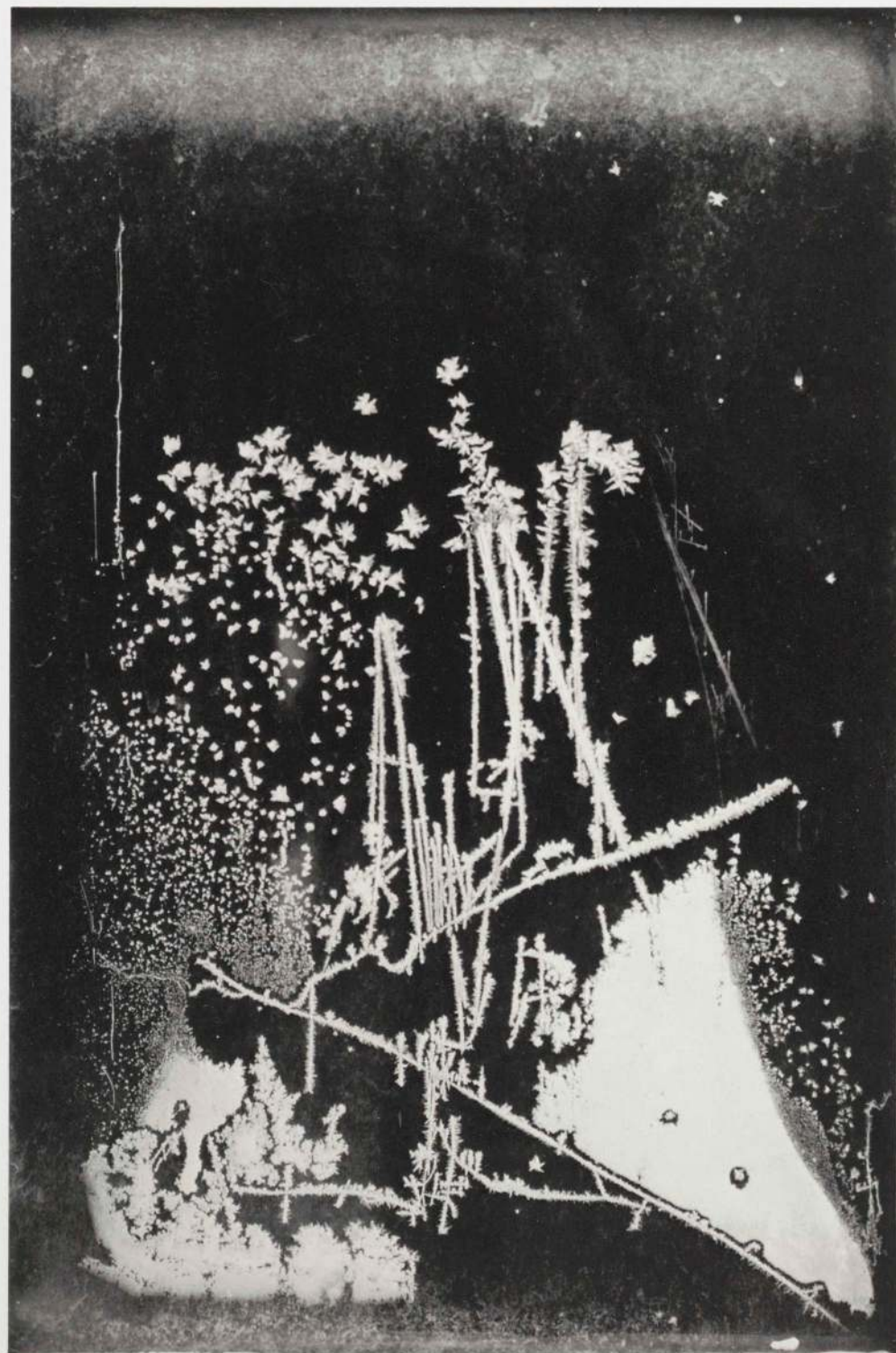


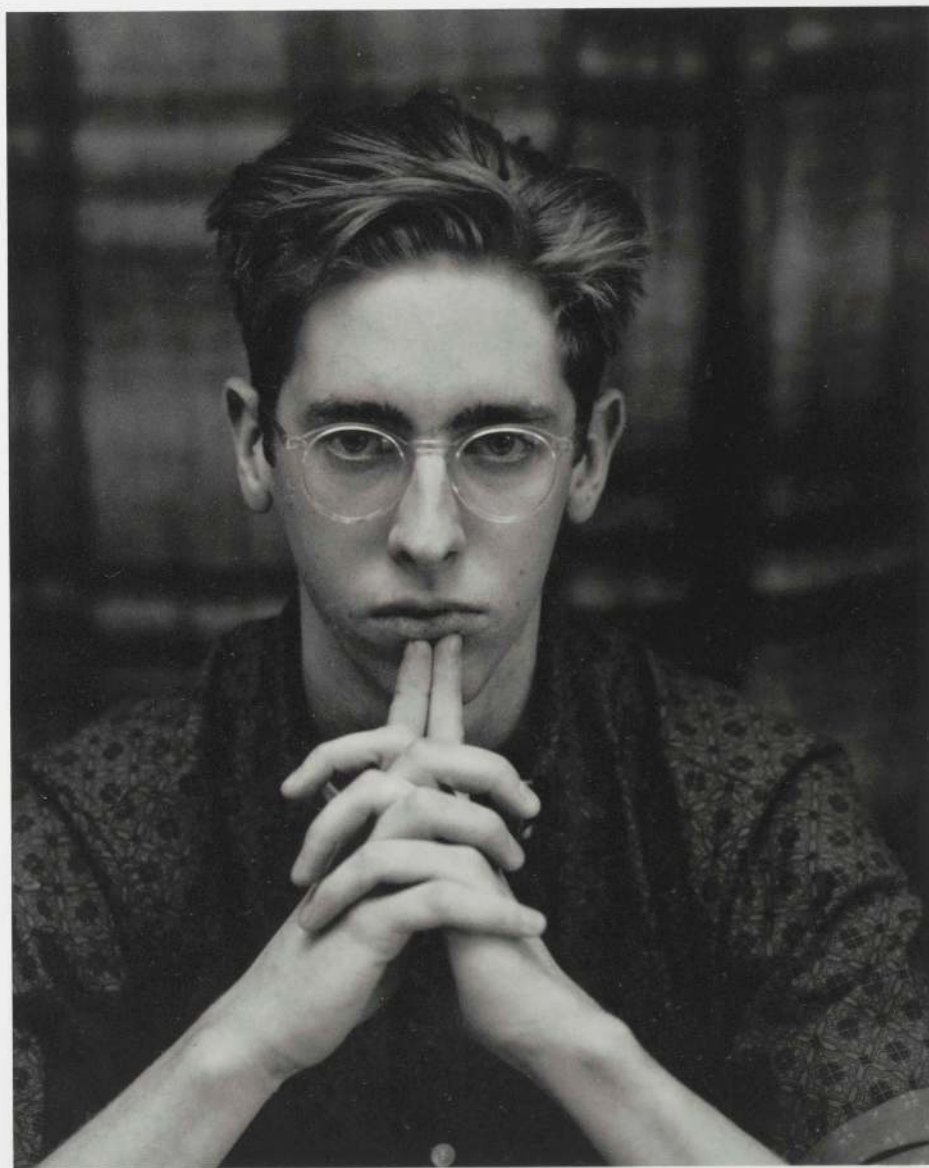


132. *Ritual Branch*  
1958



133. Parker Alley, Rochester  
1958



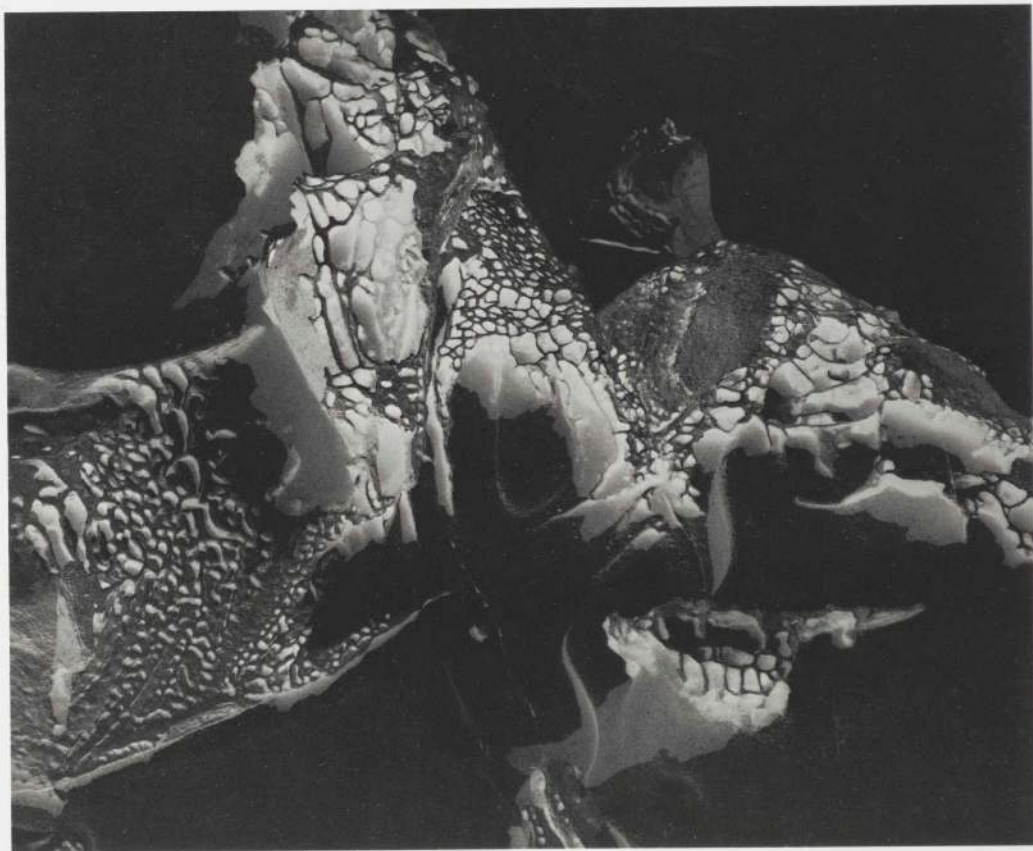


134. Herbert Hamilton  
1959



135. *Cross Form*  
1963



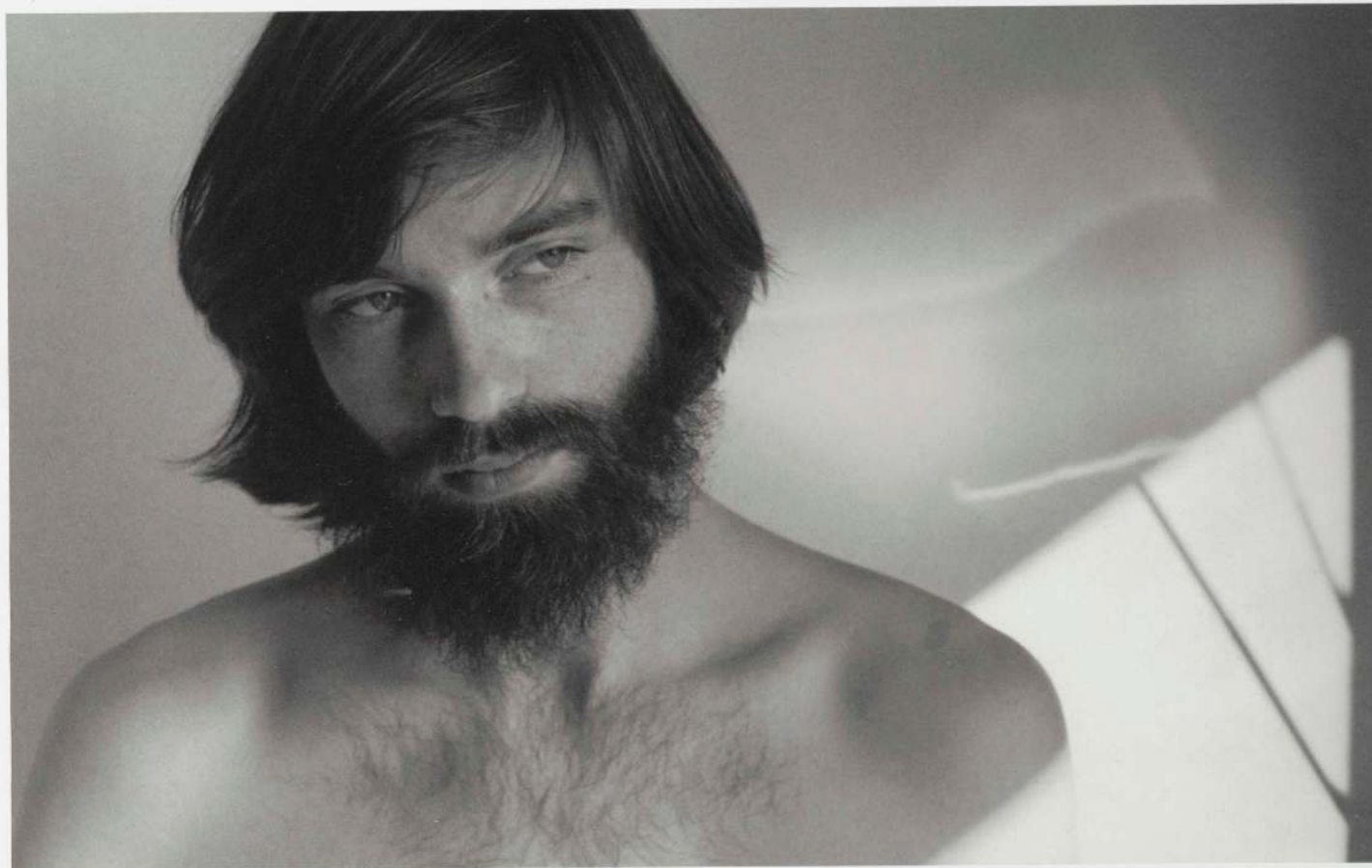


136. Vicinity of Pescadero Beach, California  
1951





137. Wyoming, New York  
1957



138. Arlington  
1973





139. *Moon and Wall Encrustations*  
1964



140. Dan DeBoie  
1942





141. Joyce Lancaster  
1951



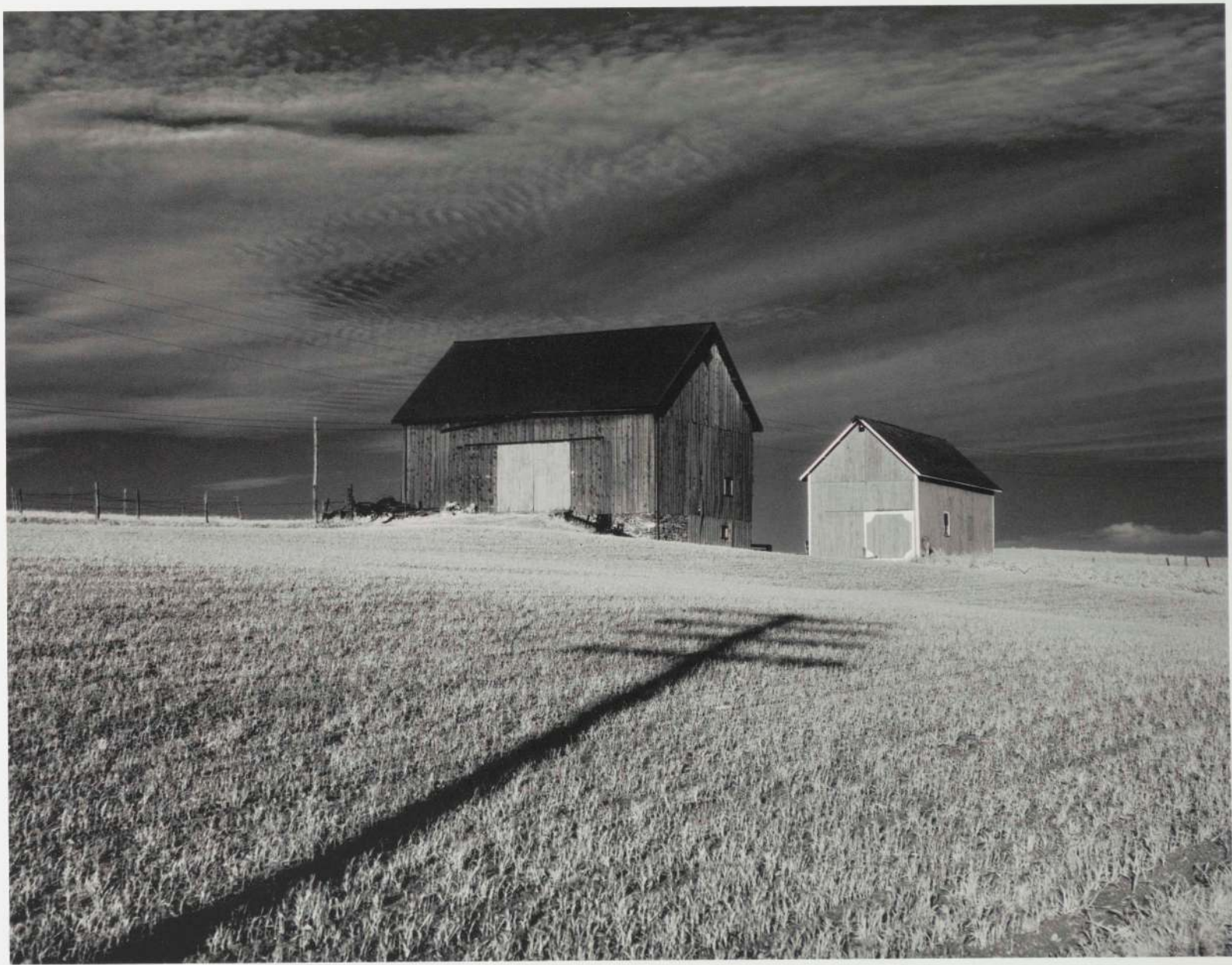
142: *Beginnings*  
1962





143. S.W. Front Avenue and Madison Street, Portland  
1940





144. Vicinity of Dansville, New York  
1955



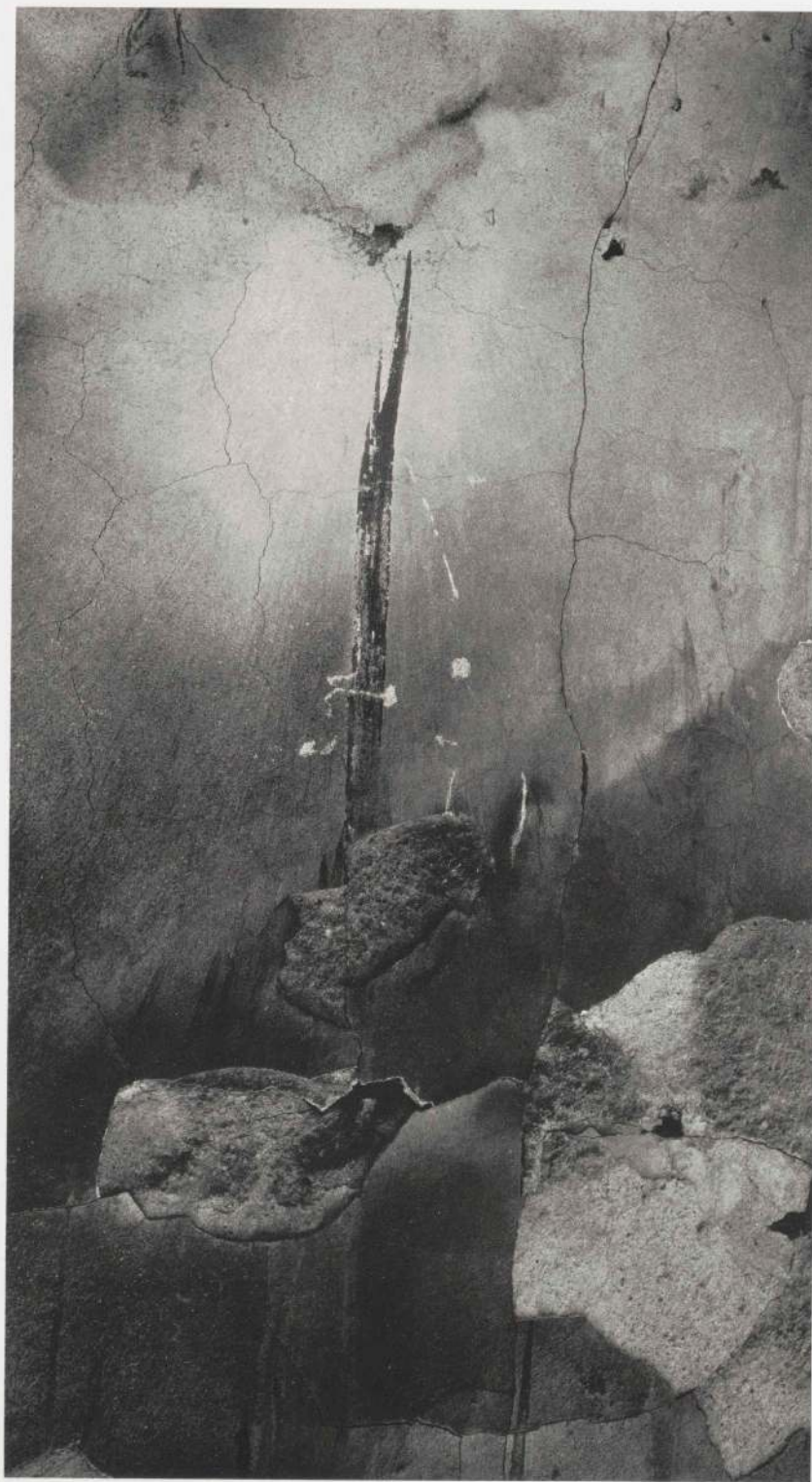


145. Chilca Cemetery, Peru  
1973



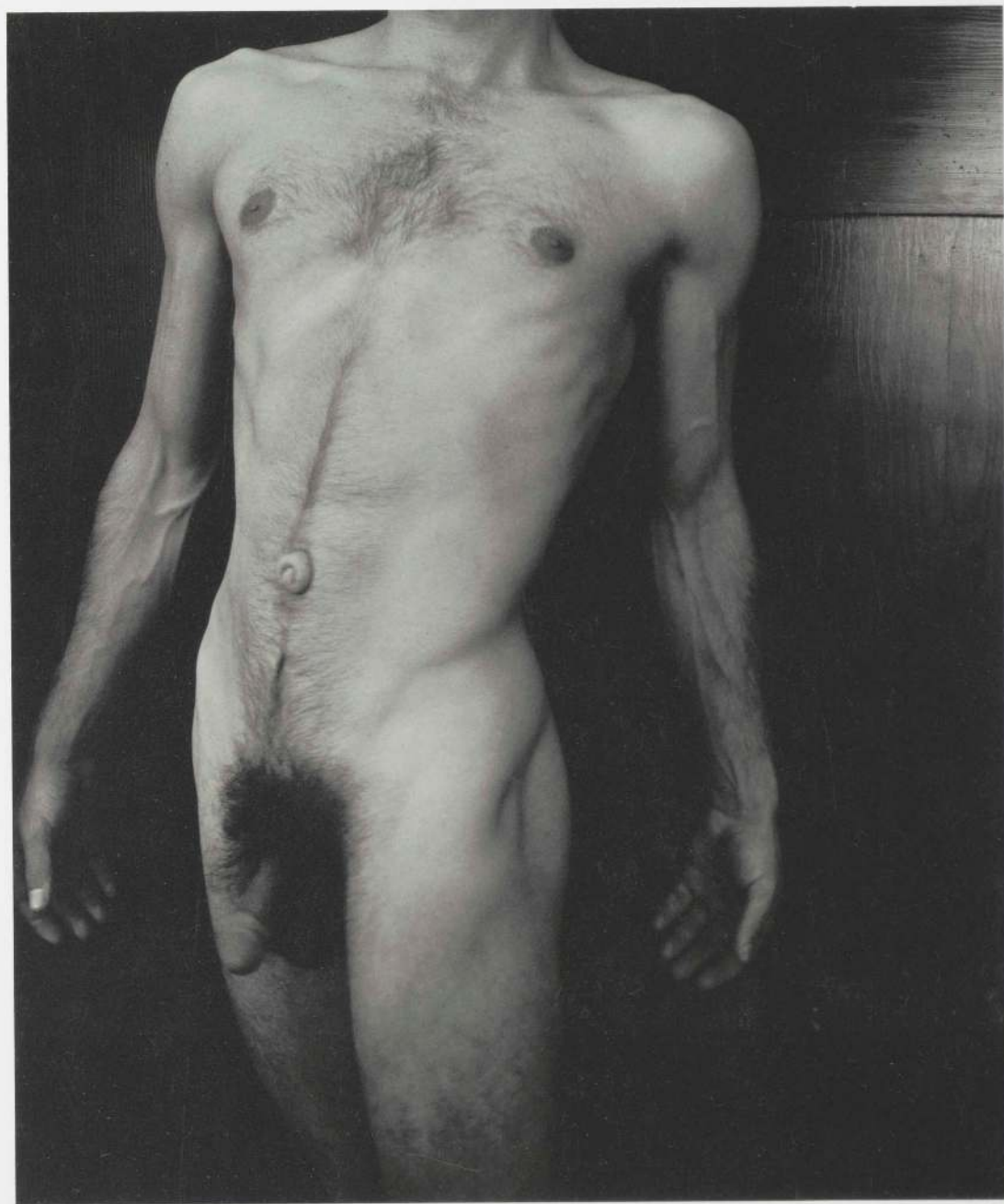
146. Vicinity of Georgetown, Colorado  
1962



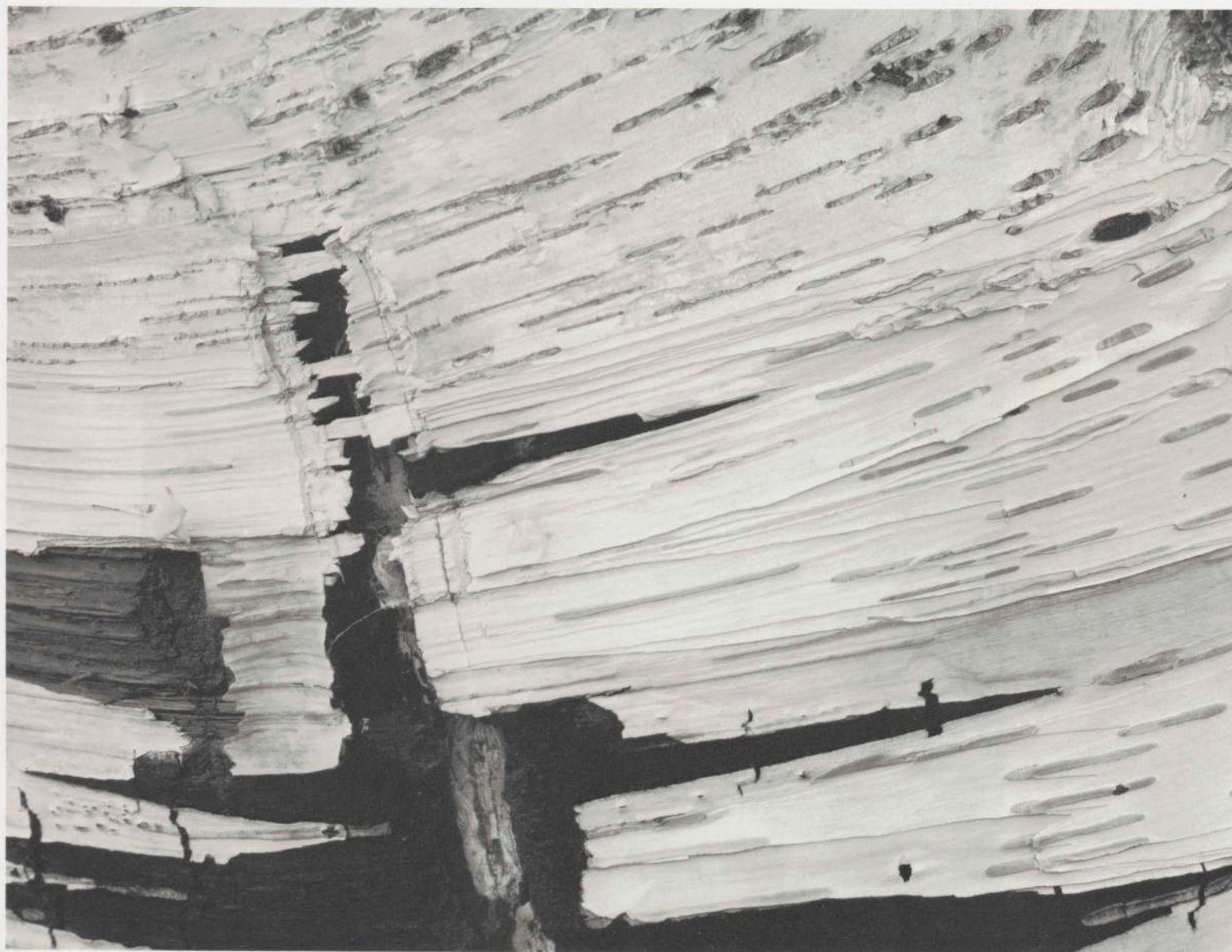


147. Santa Fe, New Mexico  
1966

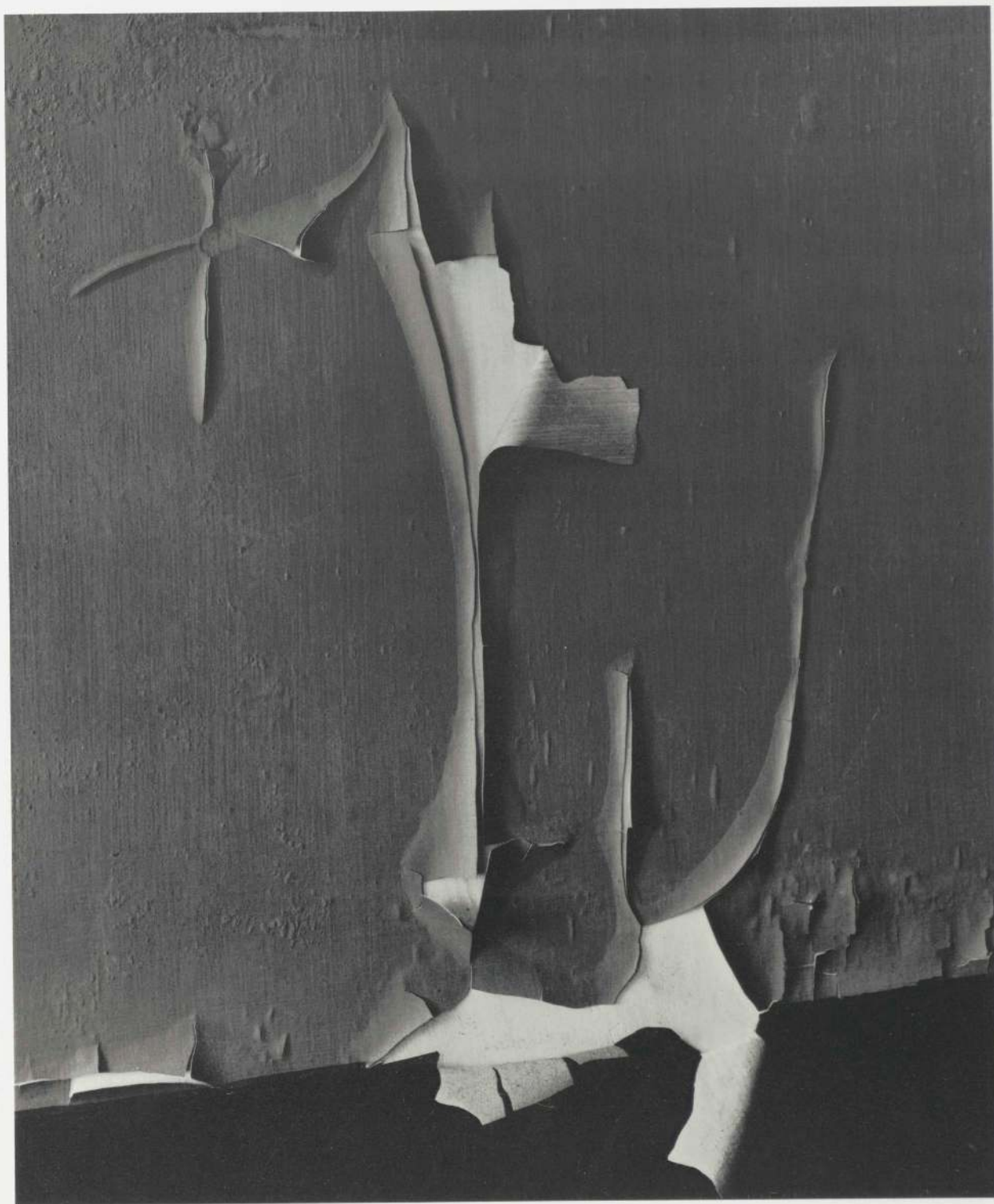
148. Tom Murphy  
1948







149. Letchworth State Park, New York  
1960

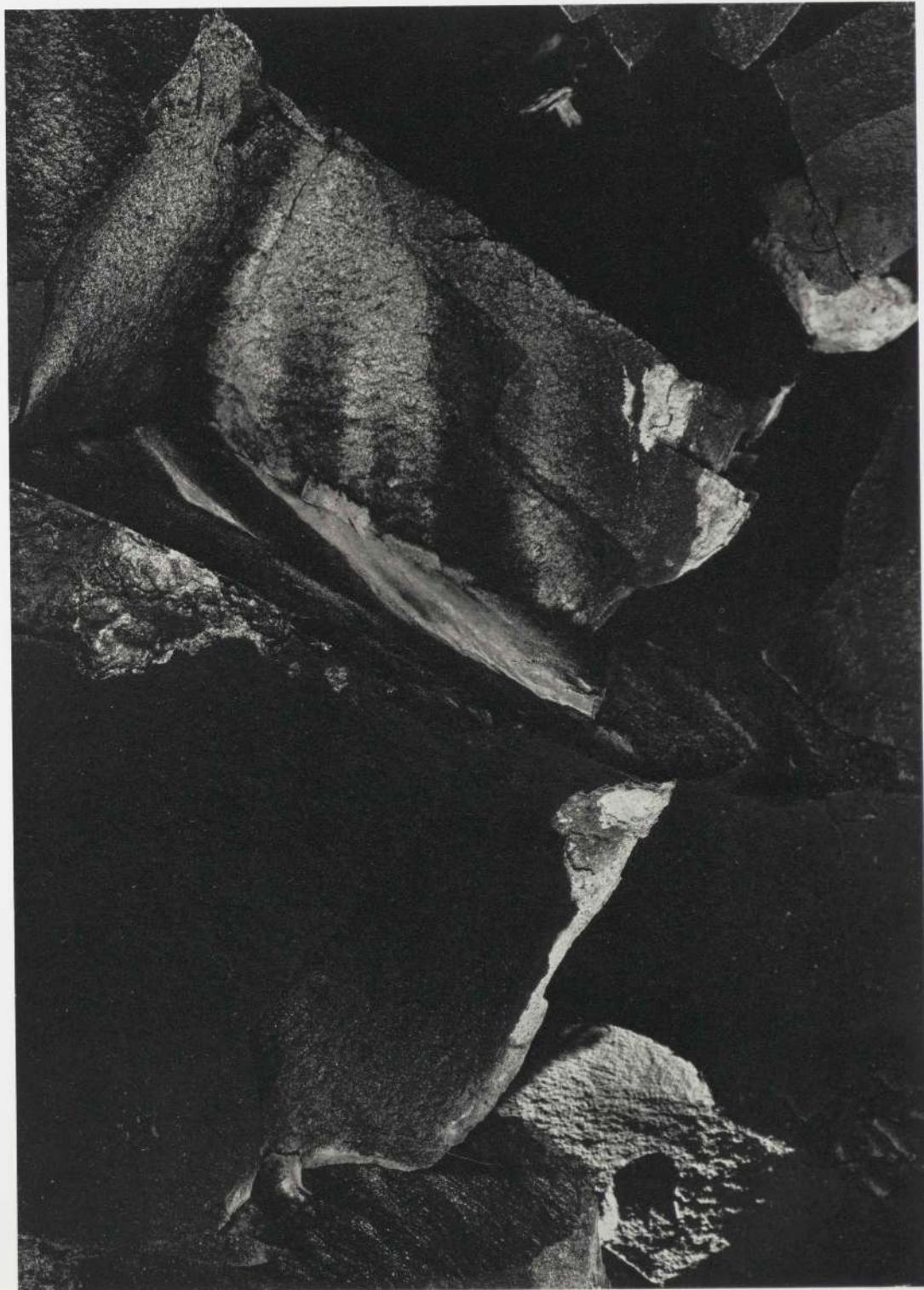


130. Rochester  
1959



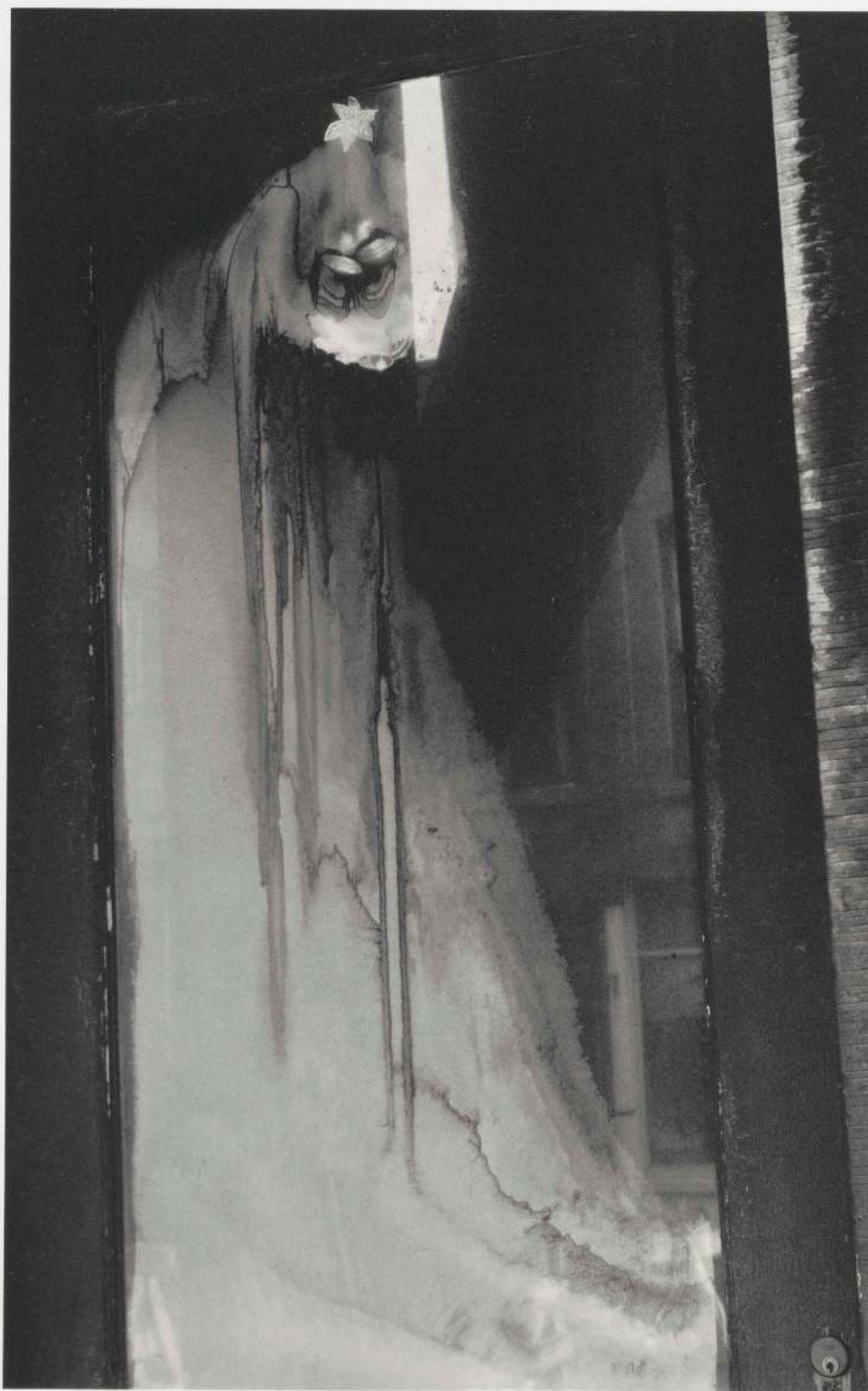


151. Water Pocket Fold Canyon, Utah  
1966



152. Henry Mountains, Utah  
1964

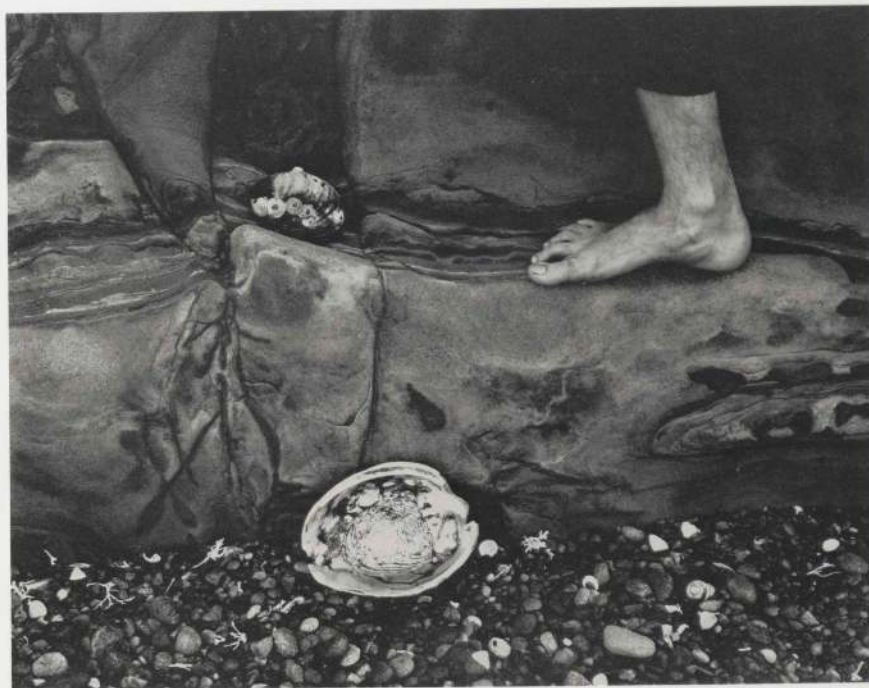




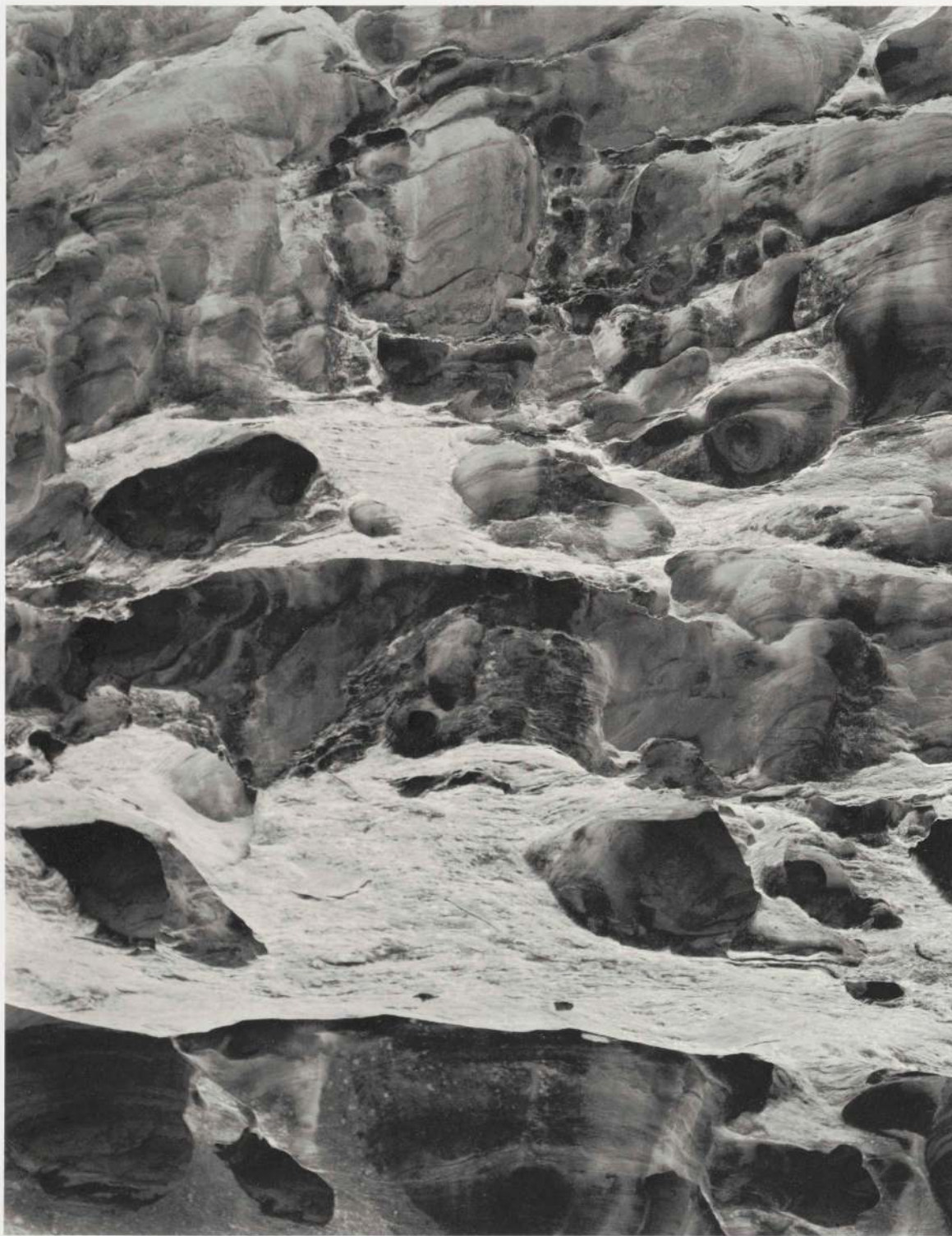
153. Batavia, New York  
1958

154. Don Normark  
1950

155. Weston Beach, Point Lobos, California  
1952







156. Cohab Canyon, Utah  
1966

157. Battery Street, San Francisco  
1952







158. *The Three Thirds*  
1957



159. Steep Hill, Lincoln, England  
1975











162. Copper Creek, Oregon  
1941



163. Old San Juan Cemetery, Puerto Rico  
1973





164. *Burning Bush*  
1946

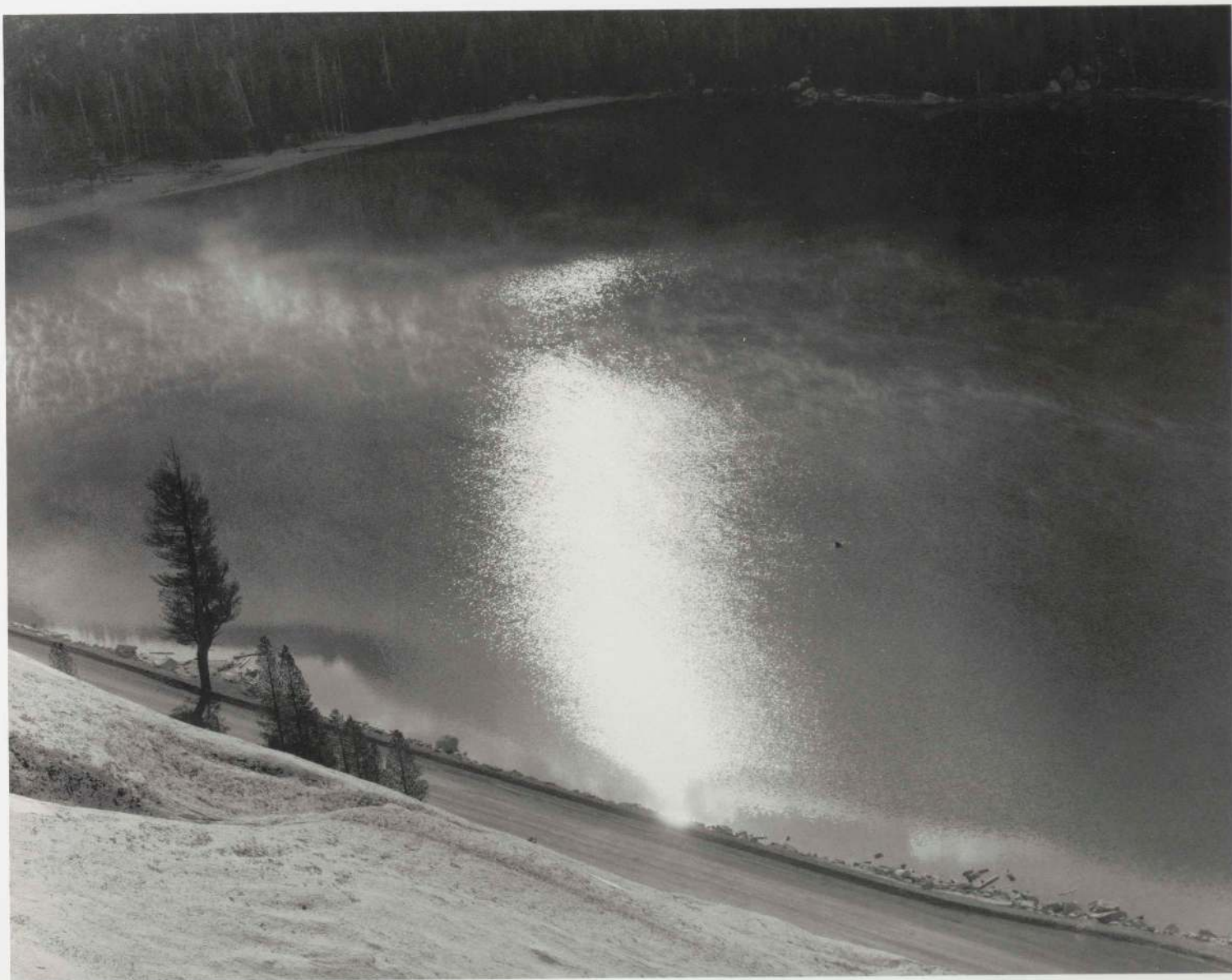


165. *Sun in Rock*  
1947





166. Noyo, California  
1948



167. Lake Tenaya, California  
1960



168. *Easter Sunday*  
1963



169. *Night Icicle*  
1959







- 170. Mendocino, California  
1948

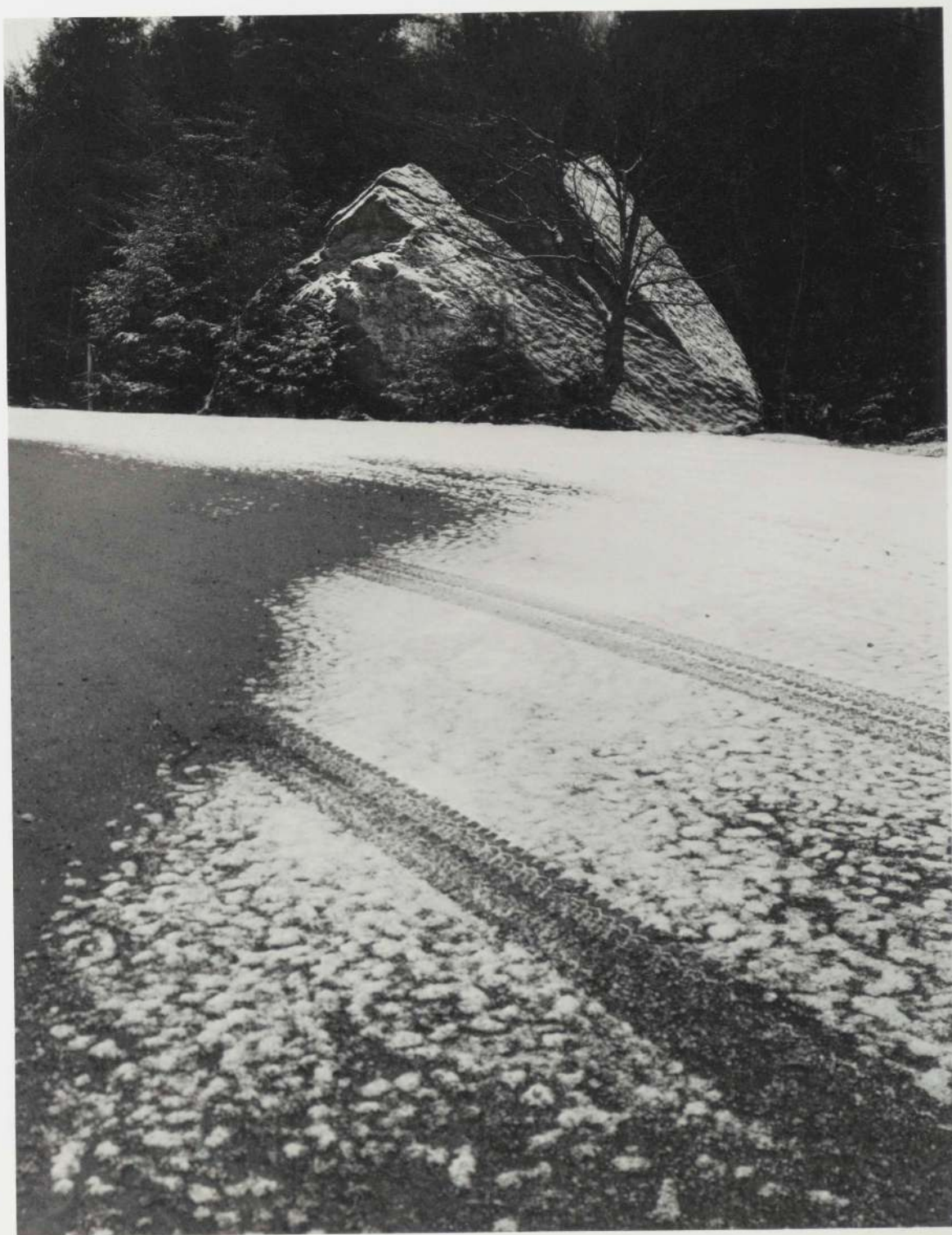


171. Bristol, Vermont  
1968



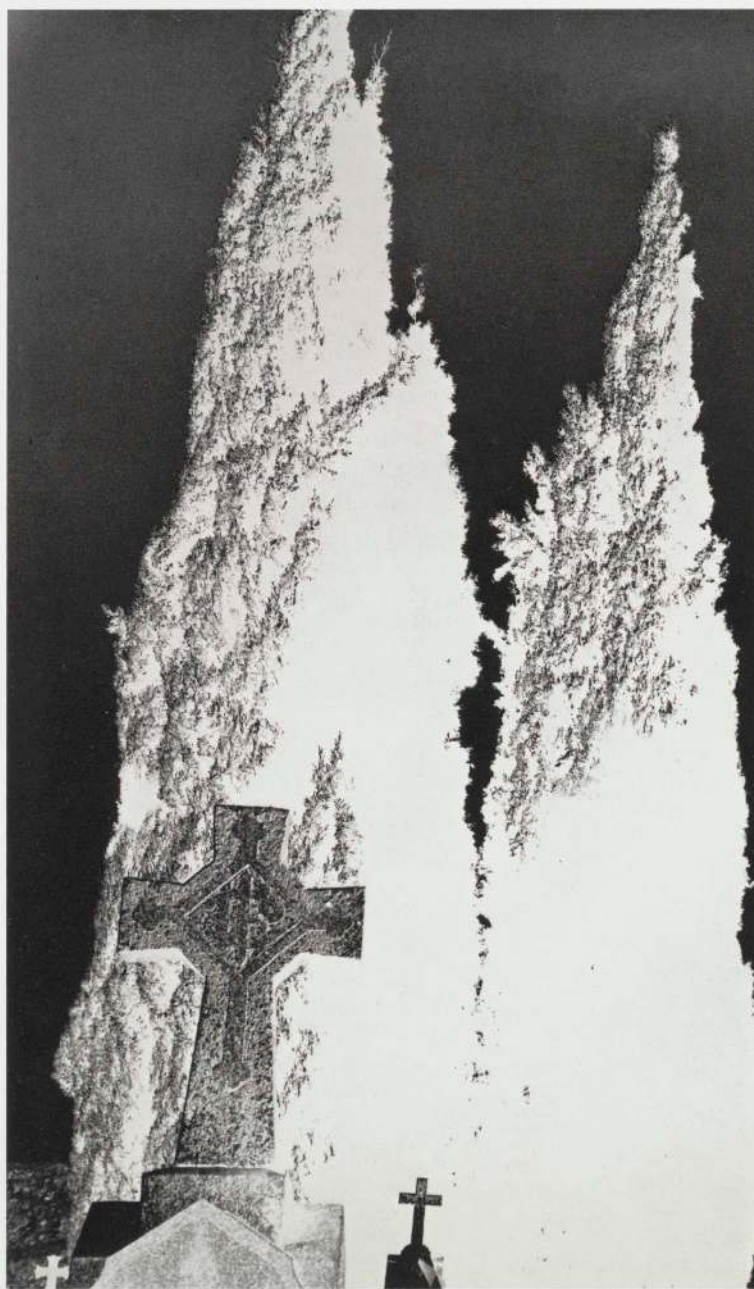
172. *Essence of Bont*  
1967



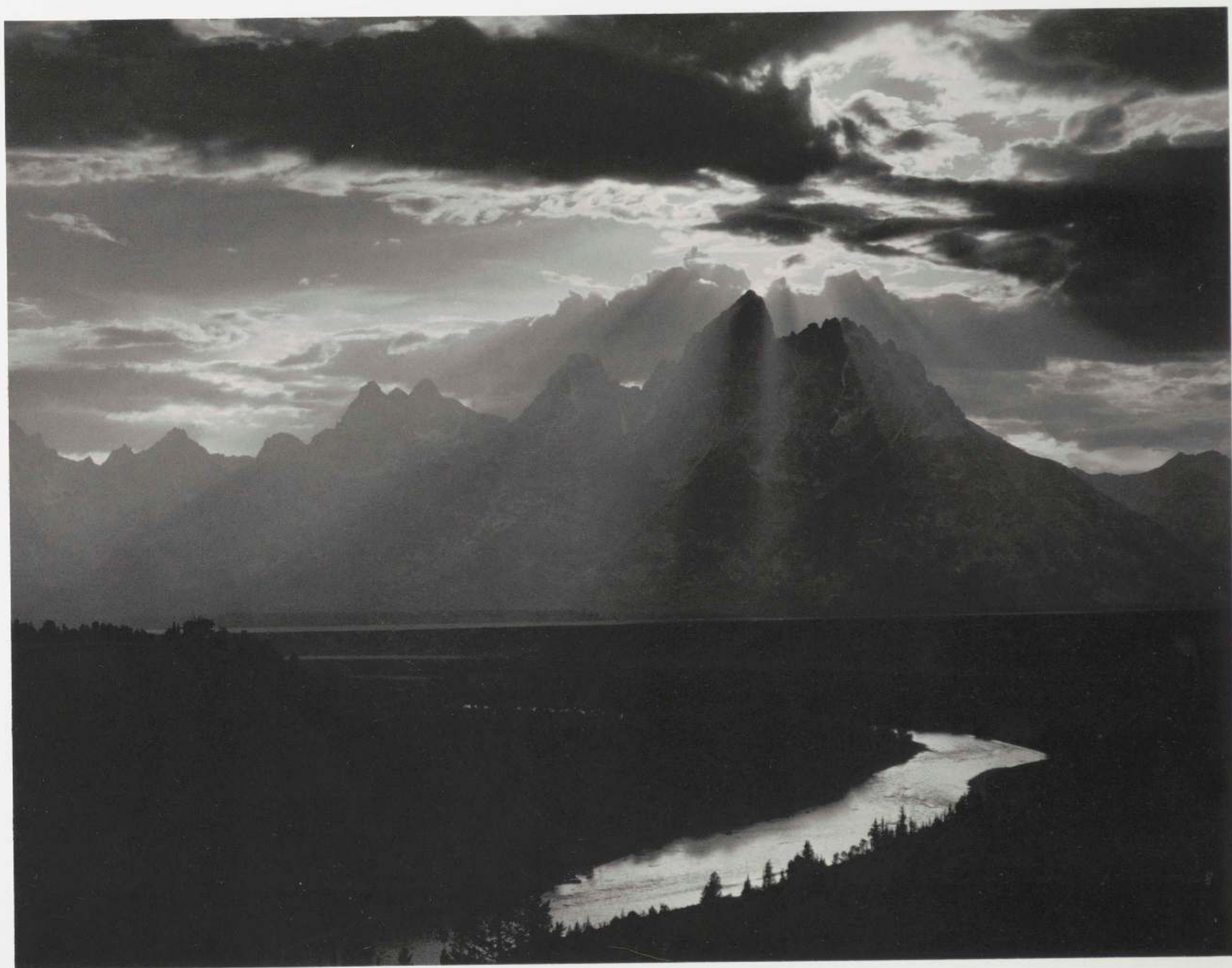


173. Bristol, Vermont  
1971





174. Serbian Church Graveyard, Jackson, California  
1948



175. Grand Teton National Park, Wyoming  
1959





# THE SEQUENCE

Grouping photographs was Minor White's preferred mode of presentation, and the sequence, of all his arrangements, was his most sophisticated form of pictorial expression.<sup>1</sup>

Initially the sequence was an outgrowth of White's work in poetry. However, in the realm of photographic art, perhaps his most important inspiration was the sequences of Alfred Stieglitz begun in the 1920s.<sup>2</sup> Stieglitz taught that not all photographs need function as individual or summational works, but that certain images in a structured context could serve in support of others and could create a total statement more complex and multifaceted than single works alone or loose assortments of related pictures.

In addition to the influence of Stieglitz's sequences, White learned a great deal about the laying out of photographs from Nancy Newhall at the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 1945–46. She had been influenced by Stieglitz's work and by her conversations with him beginning in the late 1930s, and it was she who encouraged Minor White to meet Stieglitz.

While White was at the museum, Nancy Newhall was organizing a retrospective of Edward Weston's photographs. Her installation of this exhibition was a revelation to him.<sup>3</sup> Nancy Newhall was gifted in her understanding of photographs and had a remarkable feeling for the dynamics of expression in pictorial art and an acute sensitivity for the photographer's unique approach. Her interpretation of the iconographic elements contained in individual photographs was superb, and the way in which she could create a sympathetic ordering of such pictures was extraordinary.<sup>4</sup>

Minor White's sequences, highly structured groupings of pictures with similar formats, sometimes contain ten, twenty, or thirty photographs. They need to be studied in a state of concentration, or heightened awareness, and involve recognition of both the content and feeling, the intellectual and emotional aspects, of each image in relation to its adjacent images. However, one must read the images as an ensemble, in their cumulative assertion of a complex and interconnected idea, to sense the import of the artist's statement.<sup>5</sup>

Describing the sequence as "a cinema of stills," Minor White wrote, "The time between photographs is filled by the beholder,

first of all from himself, then from what he can read in the implications of design, the suggestions springing from treatment, and any symbolism that might grow from within the work itself. . . . The meaning appears in the mood they [the symbols] raise in the beholder; and the flow of the sequence eddies in the river of his associations as he passes from picture to picture."<sup>6</sup>

Reading White's sequences depends on understanding both the symbolic and the descriptive capabilities of his photography. He was concerned with the specificity of photographic realism. "The spring-tight line between reality and photograph has been stretched relentlessly, but it has not been broken. These abstractions of nature have not left the world of appearances; for to do so is to break the camera's strongest point—its authenticity"<sup>7</sup>; and, "The camera leads me back into the world—I do not wish to isolate out of it, but to return to it, to keep in touch with it."<sup>8</sup>

Most of Minor White's early sequences, those dating from the 1940s, have a narrative structure, although they are not anecdotal. In 1950 the style of his sequences of easily recognizable pictures, with meanings that closely parallel the literal content of the pictures, began to change. The pictures became more suggestive and broadly symbolic, causing the formation of an impression, a "feeling-state," shaped by White and by the personality of the viewer.<sup>9</sup> All of White's sequences executed through 1952 contained texts. However, he gradually abandoned their use, and the elimination of these texts, most often introspective, poetic thoughts, further extended the sequences outward from the artist.<sup>10</sup> During these years White's pictures became more abstract. The increasing abstraction came about, in part, because of his growing use of his sequences as components of his teaching practice. White wanted his sequences to be less literal and not perceived as finished works. By placing a greater emphasis on subjective interpretations of the images and by freeing the order within the sequences, White believed students and others could more easily gain insight into themselves through the contemplation of his picture sets. In following this course of action, White was reflecting his growing interest in collective psychology; a tendency that would generally characterize the 1960s.



In his last period, dating from about 1969, after the onset of his illness, White's sequences became more esoteric and again displayed the character of private meditation. In some works he returned to the form of his early sequences of the 1940s, where the work was conceived as the portrayal of his own experiences. The overall tonality of his pictures and their content grow progressively darker, with an articulation of myth and notions of ritual. During these later years he resequenced several works, which even in their original form were strongly related to matters of death and mortality.<sup>11</sup>

The last new sequence of photographs that Minor White created was the *Totemic Sequence*. This work is composed of ten images made in Schoodic, Maine, in 1969 and 1970.<sup>12</sup> Conceived in 1970, it was titled in 1974. Writing about the sequence he said:

The visual origin was a reproduction of a prehistoric cave painting . . . seen by chance in a magazine of some sort about 1960. The strange figures moved me then and have been lurking ever since. I am not sure that I understand where this sequence comes from in myself. I am positive of the place but have caught glimpses elsewhere of the same totems and know such exist in other places. But maybe only that place and I in resonance could find the pictures to match the essence. . . . In the present sequence the place was a lone dike on Maine's granite shore. . . . I saw it in 1968 but did not photograph—then three times in 1969 and the last time on a trip to Schoodic in 1970. I visit it whenever I can.<sup>13</sup>

A totem is a natural object, especially an animal, serving among certain primitive peoples as the emblem of a clan or family by virtue of an intimate, ancestral relationship. The totem—or rather, the spirit it embodies—is the common representation that unifies the tribe, or clan, or some similar group.<sup>14</sup> In this sequence, the iconographic motif, or totemic image, is the animal.

One reading of this sequence is that White feels an affiliation, or kinship, with totems, and he perceives them as bearers of special, magical spirits, or even as supernatural guardians. He is also concerned with the idea of place, of a sacred site, and that spiritual power he felt when photographing at a special location. By 1974 White had become fascinated by anthropology and myth.<sup>15</sup> He was also involved with astrology. Not surprisingly, therefore, the images in this sequence depart from his customary use of specific Christian iconography and relate more directly to the archetypal.

A unique feature of this sequence is the use of the same image as the opening and concluding picture. The last picture is the first picture turned upside down and is made from two sandwiched negatives. The pictures have a reciprocal relationship to each other

in reading the sequence, indicating with the opening picture an ascending movement, which at the conclusion becomes a descending one. The configuration and symmetry of the image suggest the pictographic and geometric designs of American Indian art that White knew well; and like the Indians, White understood that, "Design and composition are man's form of seeing the larger design of nature."<sup>16</sup> The title given to the first image, and presumably also to the last, is "Power Spot."<sup>17</sup> This is the black circle at the center of the composition where the two main diagonal axes cross. It is the field of energy that symbolizes the creative point of consciousness and spirit.

The picture is an important one in that it reveals White's concern for the simultaneousness of reality and unreality in a photograph. In spite of its synthetic origin and its essentially abstract design, the image may still be read in its component parts: cracked stone, rocks, and water stains. However, the matter of orientation—of rightness—in the configuration is also an issue. Writing in his journal the year these negatives were made, he observed:

The Chinese constantly turn things upside down (as we do). The seeing of the Real as reverse of seeing real? In a way then it hit me—the upside down image of the lens! This is the Reality of a view that our eye has reversed and, it is claimed, that we adjust to an upside down vision and reverse it. But do we, perhaps we merely pervert the Real world. The g [ground] glass is truer of Real than the customary vision.<sup>18</sup>

The questions of the real and the illusory, of the correctness of our perception and thus the truth of knowledge itself, is a characteristic query for White to make late in his life. The issue he raises recalls his favorite statement of many years earlier, that of photographing "for what else it is," but now his idea is drawn more deeply to issues beyond the mere transformation of things or shapes. He is concerned here with the importance and continuance of tradition and with the universal principles of art, both representational and spiritual, going back to Paleolithic times.

Overall, the sequence can be seen to reflect a plan and not a story of events. The pictures comprising the body of the sequence, those enclosed by the first and last images, appear to be White's commentary on the notion of the sacredness of places and the significance of totems. The eight pictures break down into a structure of four pairs functioning in a counterpoised relationship to each other with a rhythm that can be represented as 1-2-2-2-2-1. The organization of this work is unique among White's sequences.



The first couplet has a bird motif, a symbol often used by White, and, appropriately, the bird is one of the central totems in the ancient scheme. The second picture in the sequence appears to depict a bird as it flies across a strong diagonal divide, moving from one space to another. The third photograph presents a second view of the great bird, its wings outstretched and its body seen from above as it hovers in the lower portion of the picture. At its head is a dark circle symbolizing the sacred site. This is a polar image representing the celestial world and the earth world.

The following two pictures are eloquent, complex images. There is a settled quality to them. One instantly recognizes that they are the same subject photographed twice; in the first the rock face is dry and in the second, wet. These close-up details metamorphosize into vast landscape scenes. The fault in each surface becomes a horizon line, with the upper portion becoming the sky and the white barnacles appearing as cloud banks.<sup>19</sup> The resulting change in tonality suggests a landscape viewed at two different times, in light and in darkness. These tones are also the symbols for the two sides of myth itself and the opposite forces of human nature. In the fourth picture the central glowing area with a circular center is perhaps the sun, and in the fifth image the same area now reflective in appearance is the moon. These landscapes are the special terrain of the sacred precinct as viewed from a human vantage point, on the land with man standing erect. It is the earth seen in its relation to the cosmos above, and it is revealed in full astrological time, during the day and the night. The title White has given to these images is "Homeplace."<sup>20</sup>

The totemic figures in the sixth and seventh images are creatures with a close pictorial affinity to those paintings found in subterranean caves such as Altamira or Lascaux, perhaps a turtle and a deer. In fact, White indicated in his notes that the cave paintings were his initial inspiration. The title given to the seventh picture, that of the deer, is "Descent," reinforcing the interpretation that this image is a vision of an underworld, or the interior of a cave that might lie beneath the sacred domain, or the earth that is the underworld of the heavens.

The final pair of images, numbers eight and nine, are darker and more enigmatic than the others. In the first the liquid quality of water is particularly apparent, and its undulating flow over the rock surface suggests movement, perhaps the evolving process of life itself. The final image is of man, rendered in a primitive,

graffito-like style that emphasizes the parts of the body that signify the mental and the physical. The sequence concludes with an image of the original "Power Spot," bringing the viewer full circle through this depiction of mystical wisdom.

#### NOTES

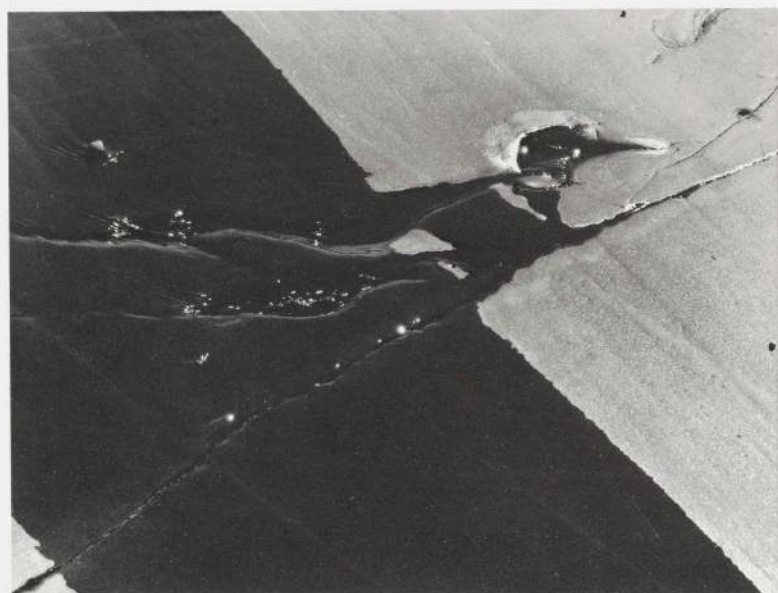
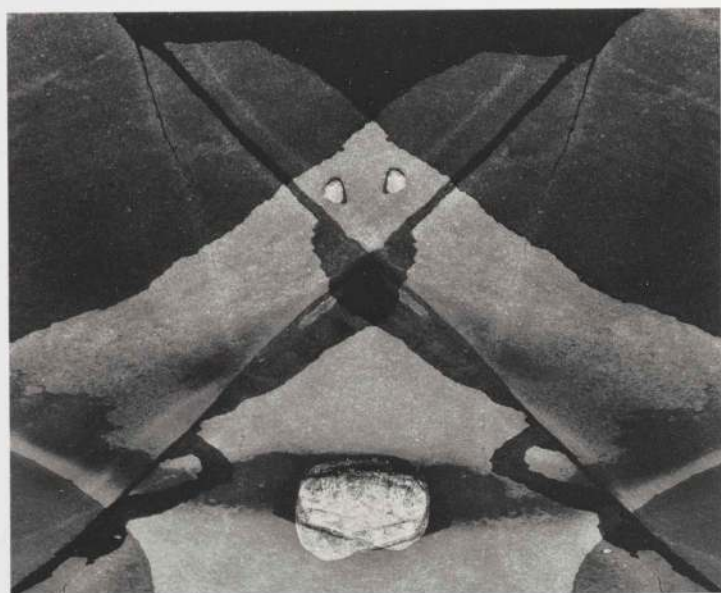
1. Minor White created or planned some one hundred groups of photographs, including series, sequences with multiple versions, and portfolios.
2. White's first substantial knowledge of Stieglitz's work was the book *America and Alfred Stieglitz*, which he read in Portland around 1939-40.
3. Minor White, "Biographical Fact Sheet," ca. 1958, n.p.
4. Between 1946 and 1953, White sent his sequences to the Newhalls for criticism. His correspondence records their impressions of his work and their advice, especially that of Nancy Newhall. This correspondence was an active, vital dialogue, which greatly influenced White during these years.
5. There are no sequences in the exhibition. In a public gallery, crowded with people, the necessary state of concentration cannot be achieved by a viewer to properly engage the works as White intended. Also, the flow of the public cannot be guaranteed to assure that the viewer will begin reading at the start of the sequence.
6. Minor White, untitled introductory statement to the *Fourth Sequence*, 1950.
7. Ibid.
8. Letter to Nancy and Beaumont Newhall, April 20, 1952.
9. Minor White, *Mirrors Messages Manifestations* (New York: Aperture, Inc., 1969), 65, from "Memorable Fancies," 1968. The complete quote reads, "A picture story explains and demonstrates. A *Sequence* sustains the feeling-states."
10. Letter to Nancy Newhall, December 30, 1951. Reflecting on the aborted exhibition of his second sequence, *Amputations*, White wrote, "That put a hell of a doubt into my mind about my ability with words. After that all sequences have very limited text."
11. Other sequences completed in 1974 and 1975 are reworkings of the second sequence, *Amputations*, into *Amputations / Last Will and Minor Testament*, and a revision of *Sequence 9* of 1954, newly titled *Sequence 9 / On the Deaths of My Fathers*.
12. The archive numbers are: 69-47; 69-49 (negative laterally reversed); 69-281; 69-130; 69-129; 69-71; 69-74; 69-44; 70-24; 69-47.
13. Minor White, "Totemic Sequence 1974," 1974, n.p.
14. See William Bridgewater and Seymour Kurtz, editors, *The Columbia Encyclopedia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963); Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Totemism* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963). Richard Wilhelm's *The Secret of the Golden Flower* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1962) was consulted for additional interpretative material.
15. Evidence of this interest may be found in several sources, including White's co-founding with D. M. Dooling of the magazine *Parabola / Myth and the Quest for Meaning* in 1976. Additionally, White had read Carlos Castaneda's cycle of four books chronicling the teachings of Don Juan (1968-74). References to Castaneda appear in White's 1974 notes concerning the *Totemic Sequence*.
16. "Memorable Fancies," August 18, 1969. White was interested in American Indian art. He collected Indian rugs and slides of Navaho sand paintings.
17. The titles for each photograph in the sequence are taken from White's proof cards.
18. "Memorable Fancies," August 18, 1969.
19. A photograph that similarly transforms one literal subject into another, in this case a dead bird still life into a landscape, was made in 1947 (pl. 24).
20. It is informative to compare these views of a spiritual place with one White made earlier, in 1955, which is the concluding image in the sequence *Rural Cathedrals* (pl. 144). Another such image is a view of Point Lobos (pl. 126) made in 1951. In a letter to Nancy and Beaumont Newhall, October 25, 1953, he described Point Lobos as an Indian ceremonial ground.

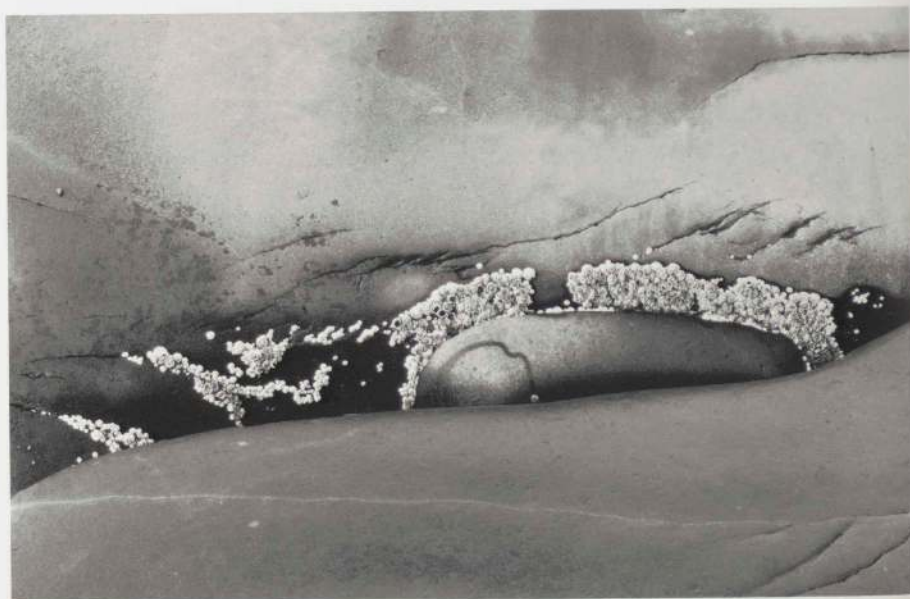
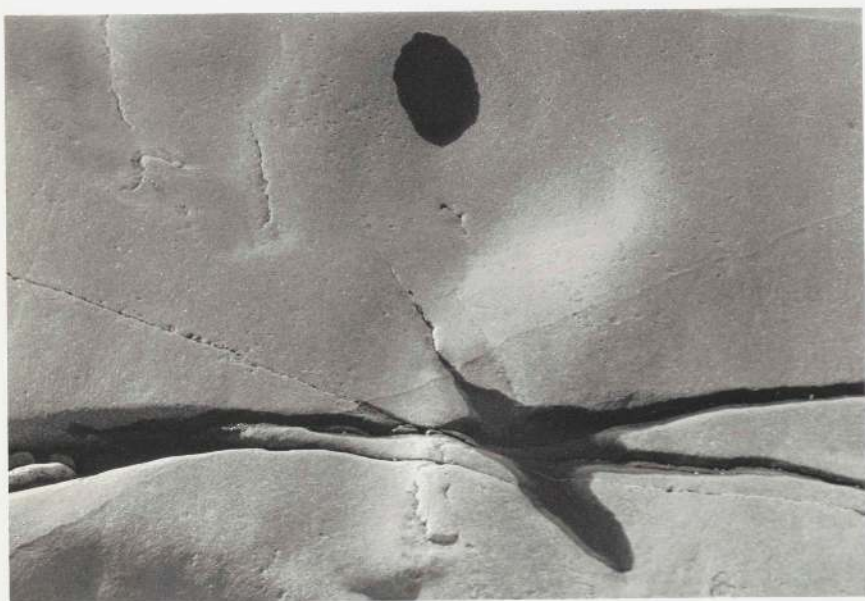




# TOTEMIC SEQUENCE





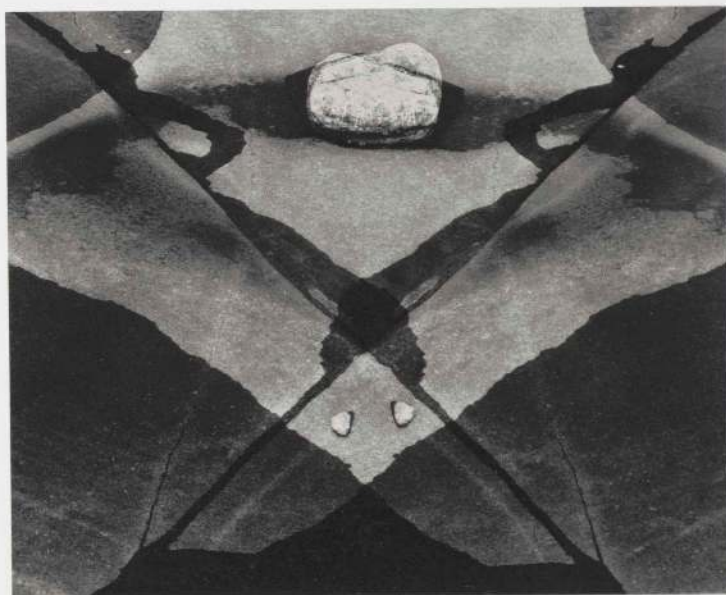
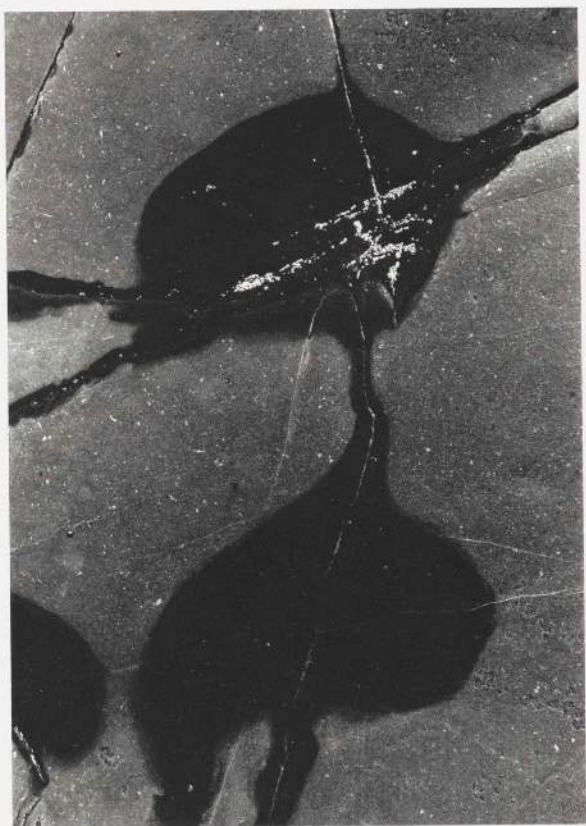
















## THE SURVEY

The following survey of one hundred images, presented in chronological order and spanning the years 1938–76, has been selected to illuminate Minor White's oeuvre. A variation of the Portfolio of Photographs, the survey presents the iconography and compositional style of White's work in a less interpretative manner.

The images were selected not only from the artist's finished prints but also from his file of nearly 15,000 proof prints. No post-humous prints were made for the survey. An effort was made to represent each year by a statistically determined number of images and to exhibit particular trends in the artist's execution, either at their inceptions or their apogees. Most importantly, images were chosen that best exemplify the artist's dedication to certain subjects.

The captions beneath the images note locations and dates. Proper names of buildings or people have been included when applicable, but always a specific place and date is given following White's records. Poetic titles do not appear. Descriptive titles, as well, have not been included, so that the images could be seen, "for what they are" and "for what else they are."<sup>1</sup>

After the specific date of each image, there is a number in parentheses, which is Minor White's reference number for that image.<sup>2</sup> White was an organized artist and assigned numbers to his negatives that indicate their chronology.<sup>3</sup> However, when negatives of various sizes from cameras of different formats were exposed simultaneously, it was discovered that White occasionally transcribed his field notes erroneously; and that his reference numbers misrepresent the exact timing of his movements.<sup>4</sup> In addition, at times, he left whole groups of negatives unnumbered.<sup>5</sup> Thus, the images reproduced in this survey have been arranged in chronological order according to the dates the artist inscribed on the backs of his proof cards and on his contact sheets, and only in cases where exact dates were not indicated by White, or could not be deduced from his calendars, were images arranged according to his reference numbers.

The survey presents White's iconography year by year, demonstrating that certain preferred subjects were standard symbols in his repertoire. For example, all of the following symbols appear in

the first ten years of the survey: the door, broken window, ship, lamp or light, bicycle, car, phallus, as well as the grave, cross, fence, gate, blossom, ladder, and the skull or disembodied face.

White's iconography is illuminated when reviewed with his chronology and writings. The door that White photographs in 1938 (fig. 1) is rendered as an architectural detail. The photograph was taken when White was commissioned by the WPA to document the demolition of cast-iron facade buildings in Portland. But his door of 1952 (fig. 43) is something more than a door. It is a face, the place to enter the mind, as well as a door to enter a structure. In "Memorable Fancies" for the same year, White records his difficulty in approaching "desirable" sitters and reveals that instead he has been making pictures of objects in human terms. The door that White renders in 1968 (fig. 82) is the shimmering door to the celestial heavens, which is reached by a ladder. This is a likely interpretation given that in 1968 White undertook the study of astrology.

Many illustrations of the biomorphic abstraction White employed to transform subjects such as doors and successively create an otherworldliness about them are visible in the survey. Another example is White's frequent allusion to the existence of mechanical "creatures." Beginning perhaps with a playful attention to faces or skulls in architectural elements (fig. 20), White develops a sometimes humorous, sometimes frightful vision of tractors, bicycles, cars, and ships as creatures inhabiting the urban environment (figs. 30, 32, 33, 36). White's ditchdigger of 1949 is the finest illustration of this vision (fig. 30). The artist renders the machine in perfect profile, in an even gray light, and from a generous distance so that it appears as some sort of strange dinosaur. In fact, White's tractor-dinosaur is a more static version of one of his favorite street subjects, the Chinese New Year dragon (fig. 45). A similarly intriguing juxtaposition is White's photograph of a shark-shaped parade float (fig. 37) with his views of ships at dock (figs. 36, 44).

Aside from illuminating White's iconography, certain knowledge can be gained from the survey regarding special photographic techniques White employed at different times in his career. During the forties White favored solarizing prints (fig. 13), whereas during



the fifties he made reverse or negative prints (fig. 56), and during the sixties he began making multiple exposed negatives and using sandwiched negatives to make prints (figs. 87, 86). White's use of infrared film to invigorate the landscape of upper New York State is represented in the survey by an image of 1955 (fig. 51), even though White had experimented with infrared film in the early forties while photographing the landscape of eastern Oregon.

The survey also charts the compositional style of White's photography. In his figural work, which involves both expressive lighting and penetrating views of sitters in environments that are themselves the equivalents of the sitters' personalities, White exercises a keen sense of camera distance and cropping to indicate meaning. For White, distinctive croppings had symbolic significances. Photographs such as Tom Murphy (fig. 25) and Mark Adams (fig. 39) exemplify White's bust portraits. By this choice of cropping, White portrays these men as minds and bodies. On the other hand, White emphasizes only William Smith's intellect by coming in close to his friend and using the film frame to record Smith only from the chin up (fig. 46).

When White portrays the anonymous naked body, showing it from the shoulders down (fig. 22), he comments on the physical or sexual attitudes of himself and his sitters. When he exhibits an entire body, naked or clothed, such as Gino Cippola (fig. 9) or Joe Goe (fig. 16), he addresses the whole man. Not surprisingly White rarely photographed a full-length female figure in his career, and even a three-quarter-length view, such as Joyce Lancaster (fig. 41), is rare. Most often White photographed women from the shoulders up as he recorded Drid Williams (fig. 69), portraying them as dominantly intellectual beings.

White's approach to landscape, as seen in the survey, becomes increasingly less grandiose (fig. 21), and instead more intimate and involving of personal symbols (fig. 83). This shift of emphasis occurs as the artist gradually disfavors descriptive renderings, oscillating between close-up views and generous distance views to decontextualize the natural world (figs. 57, 58, 59, 72, 74, 79). However, White never completely abandons his concern for more descriptive interpretations of nature. In the sixties, for instance, while traveling in the American west, he contemporaneously uses both photographic approaches—the literal and the abstract (figs. 63, 64).

The survey demonstrates the convergence of White's early landscape work (figs. 8, 13) and his still-life photography (figs. 2, 7,

18) into his signature biomorphic abstract style of photography. White's decontextualizing begins with the signs and graffiti of San Francisco (fig. 23), gradually includes the kelp (fig. 28) and rock formations (fig. 35) of Point Lobos, and climaxes in his close-up photographs of peeled paint and tar drips (fig. 40), as well as icicles and frosted glass (fig. 55), in Rochester.

Overall, a feeling of frontality marks White's landscape work; not rigid frontality, but he seldom prefers sweeping recessions into space. When a recession is present, White flattens it by exclusion of the horizon (fig. 88). And although his camera is at times directed straight ahead (fig. 95), it is most often directed downward (fig. 97).

White's stylistic devices for photographing the land and the human figure reveal more than a manner of making photographs; they illuminate the artist's personality. White indulged in both the grandure and intimate reality of the natural world, yet while literally recording it, he preferred to transform it.

For White the transformation always mirrored himself, since he scrutinized his subjects so personally and continually searched for identifying symbols. When White portrayed a figure, he entered the private space of his sitter so that the picture recorded the interaction, not just the individual; and similarly, when White photographed the land, he recorded something of his own spirit, rarely directing the camera too far from his feet, and thus his presence. In his unique vision, Minor White also shaped what he saw to serve the viewer; and his legacy is the creation of this oeuvre from which others can nourish themselves.

#### NOTES

1. "Memorable Fancies," December 25, 1955.
2. Minor White's reference numbers are the basis of cataloging in the Minor White Archive. The same number refers to an individual image in all of its forms: negative, proof card, and finished print.
3. Each reference number records both the year of an exposure and the chronological point during the year that the exposure was made. It consists of two numbers connected by a dash. The first number is the last two digits of the year in which White made the exposure. The second number, which sometimes incorporates a letter or decimal to indicate variants, corresponds to the number of exposures made in that year. For instance, 63-33 is the thirty-third exposure made in 1963.
4. The known inconsistencies of White's numbering of negatives have not been altered by Princeton.
5. The unnumbered images have been ordered and assigned numbers, adding them to the ends of White's numbers. Thus, there will be instances in the survey when an image with a lower number precedes an image with a higher number, even though the latter image may have been made earlier in that year.



CHRONOLOGICAL  
SURVEY OF IMAGES







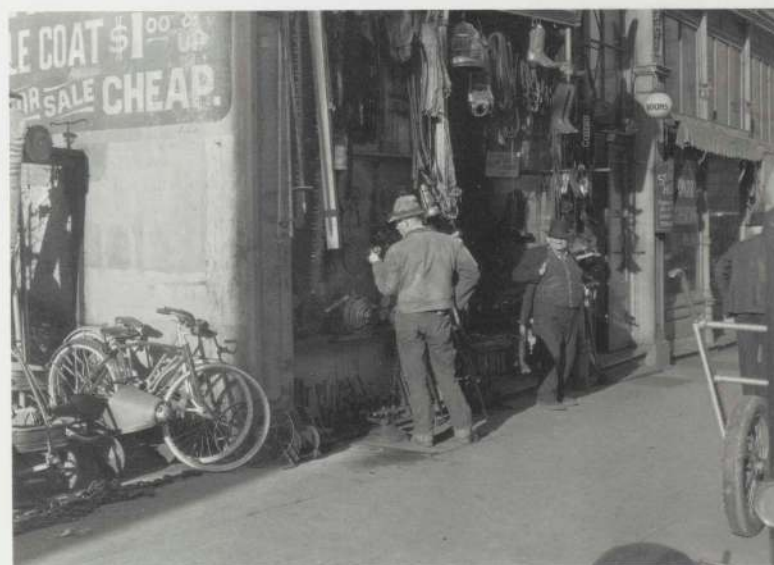
1. Cook Building, S.W. Front Avenue, Portland, Oregon  
1938 (38-1016.4)



2. Portland  
1938 (38-1110.9)



3. S.W. Front Avenue, Portland  
1939 (39-53)

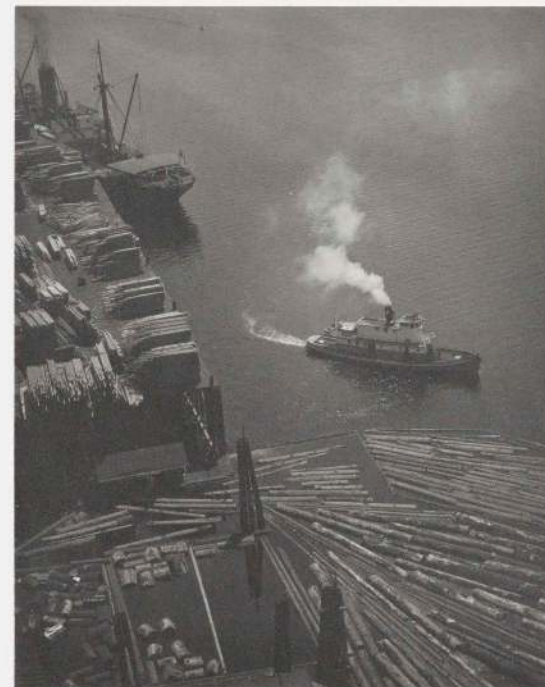


4. S.W. Harrison Street, Portland  
1939 (39-1204.6)





5. Fourth and Salmon Streets, Portland  
1939 (39-1206.1A)



6. Portland Lumber Company, Portland  
1939 (39-1263)



7. Portland  
June 1940 (40-44)



8. Ice Lake, Oregon  
September 1940 (40-22)





9. Gino Cipolla, Portland  
1940 (40-672)



10. Cemetery, Enterprise, Oregon  
Spring 1941 (41-45)



11. Foot Hill Road, Grande Ronde Valley, Oregon  
Spring 1941 (41-55)



12. Earle Curtis, Anthony Lakes, Oregon  
Winter 1941 (41-90)



13. Anthony Lakes, Oregon  
Winter 1941 (41-91)



14. Anthony Lakes, Oregon  
Winter 1941 (41-94)

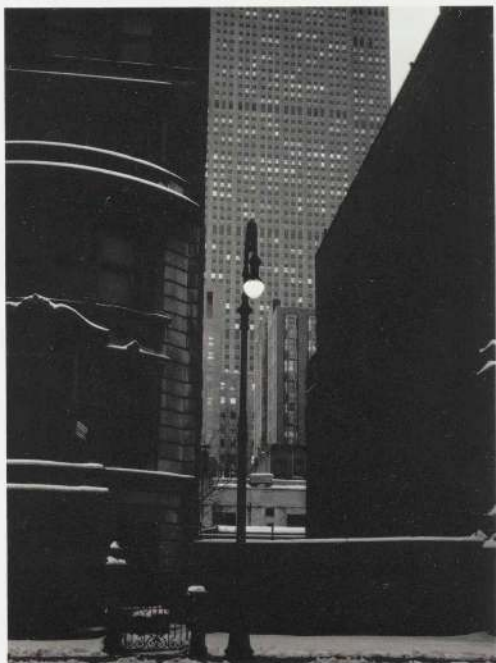


15. Portland Civic Theater, *Jim Dandy*  
March 1942 (42-58)



16. Private Joe Goe, Oahu, Hawaii  
1943 (43-105)

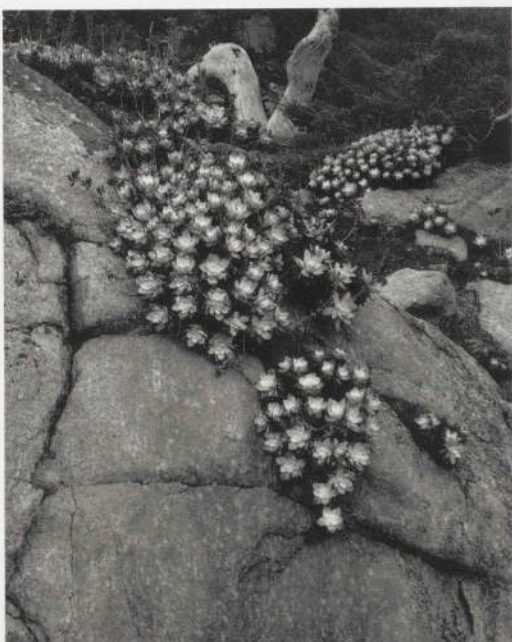




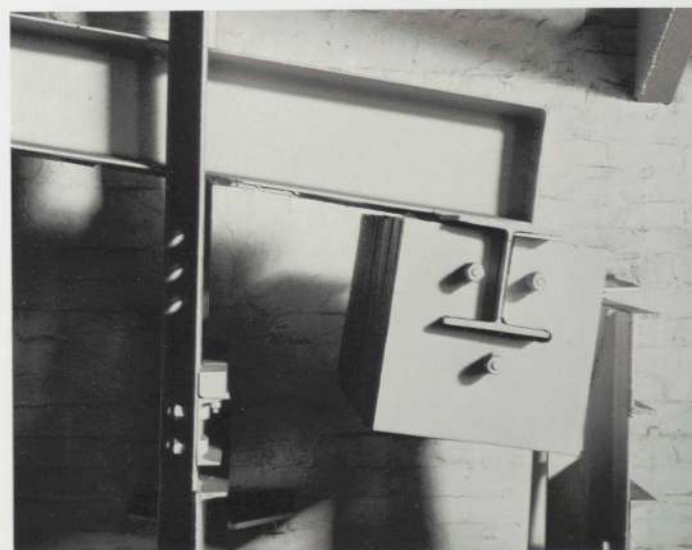
17. West 53d Street and RCA Building, New York City  
1946 (46-16)



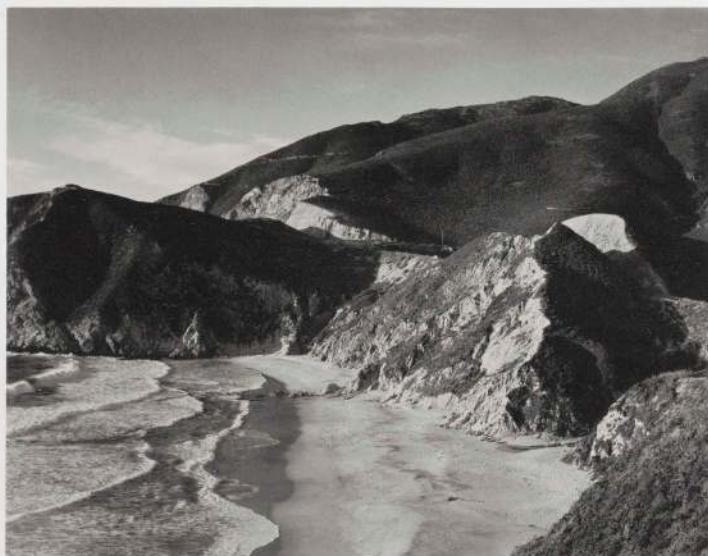
18. New York City  
1946 (46-19)



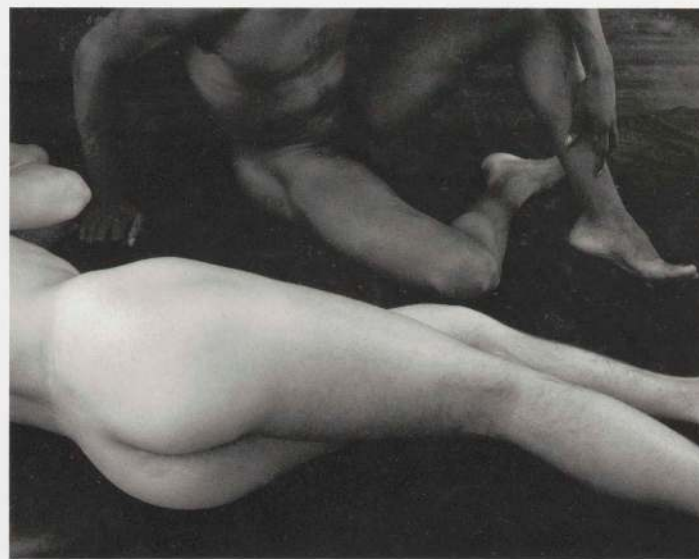
19. Point Lobos, California  
November 20, 1946 (46-123)



20. PGE Station A, San Francisco  
January 21, 1947 (47-6)



21. Matchstick Cove, San Mateo County, California  
October 12, 1947 (47-169)



22. San Francisco  
1947 (47-419)



23. Benicia, California  
January 14, 1948 (48-14)



24. Big Dome, Point Lobos, California  
July 22, 1948 (48-283)





25. Tom Murphy, San Francisco  
September 7, 1948 (48-336)



26. Chinese Camp, California  
October 23, 1948 (48-425)



27. San Francisco  
Late February 1949 (49-70)



28. North Beach, Point Lobos, California  
March 4, 1949 (49-124)





29. Mission District, San Francisco  
March 16 or 17, 1949 (49-212)



30. San Francisco  
August 25, 1949 (49-539)



31. San Francisco  
September 30, 1949 (49-1593)

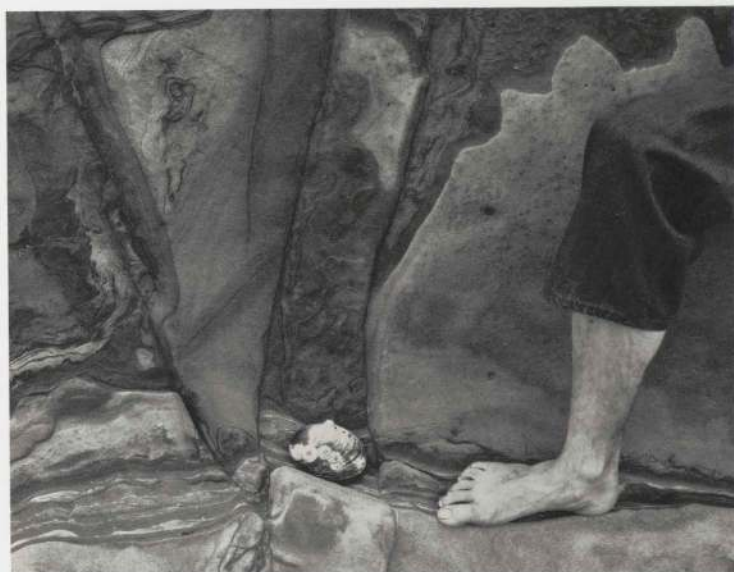


32. Aquatic Park, San Francisco  
October 23, 1949 (49-1719)





33. Tennessee Street, San Francisco  
December 28, 1949 (49-645)



34. Don Normark, Point Lobos, California  
March 15, 1950 (50-98)



35. Point Lobos, California  
March 17, 1950 (50-119)



36. Waterfront, San Francisco  
June 20, 1950 (50-619)

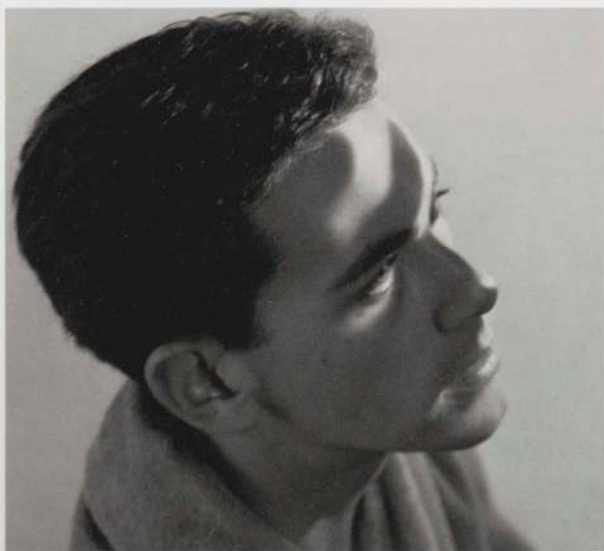




37. The Embarcadero, San Francisco  
July 4, 1950 (50-677)



38. Produce Market Area, San Francisco  
August 8, 1950 (50-988)



39. Mark Adams, San Francisco  
August 10, 1950 (50-226B)



40. Jackson Street, San Francisco  
February 25, 1951 (51-22)





41. Joyce Lancaster, San Francisco  
August 5, 1951 (51-269A)



42. Vicinity of Stinson Beach, California  
November 15, 1951 (51-257)



43. Port Street, Crockett, California  
July 29, 1952 (52-69)



44. Waterfront, San Francisco  
August 22, 1952 (52-447)



45. Chinatown, San Francisco  
February 16, 1953 (53-60)



46. William Smith, San Francisco  
March 1953 (53-790)



47. Interplayers Theater Group, *Dear Judas*, San Francisco  
April 11, 1953 (53-104)



48. Daly City Dump, California  
September 1953 (53-75)

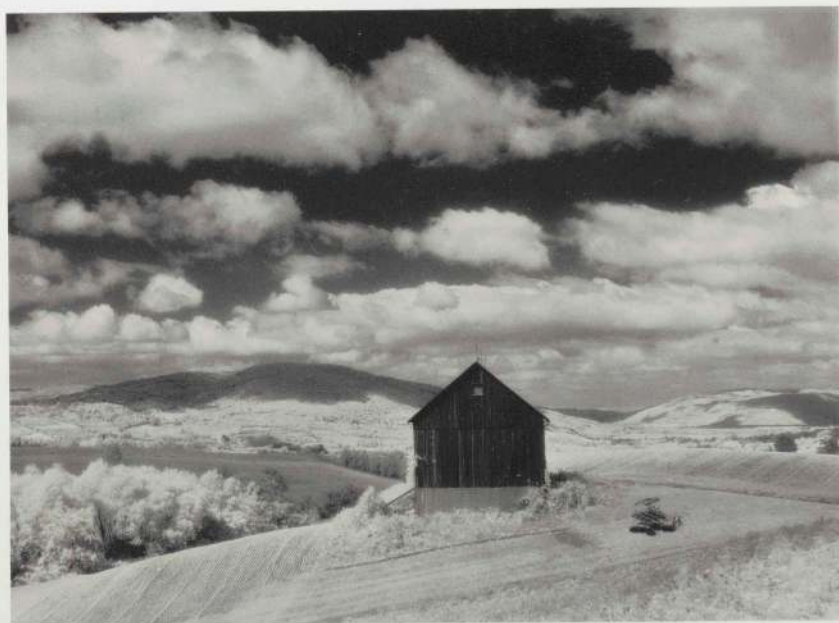




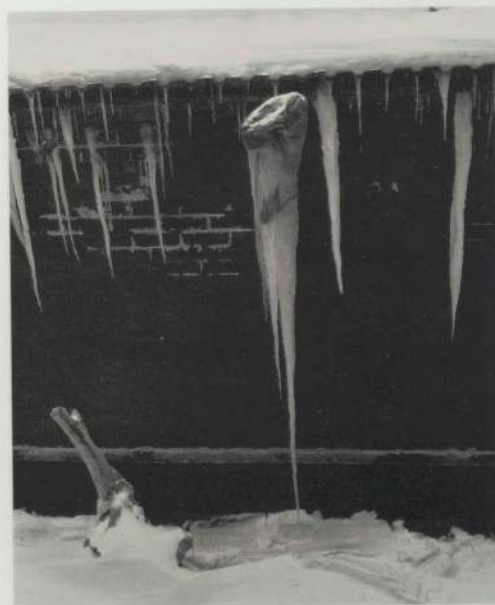
49. Pavilion, New York  
May 31, 1954 (54-5)



50. Rochester, New York  
August 22, 1954 (54-50)



51. Vicinity of Naples, New York  
October 1955 (55-41)



52. View from 72 N. Union Street, Rochester  
December 1956 (56-12)



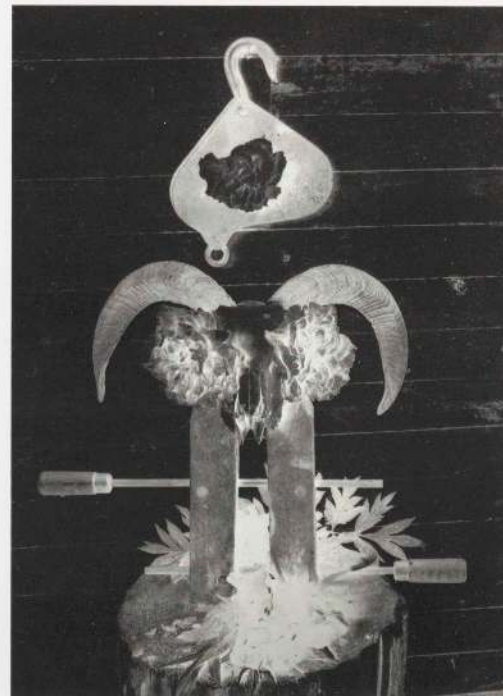
53. Walter Chappell, Pultneyville, New York  
1957 (57-130)



54. Vicinity of Machias, New York  
December 11, 1957 (57-113)



55. 72 N. Union Street, Rochester  
February 1958 (58-49)

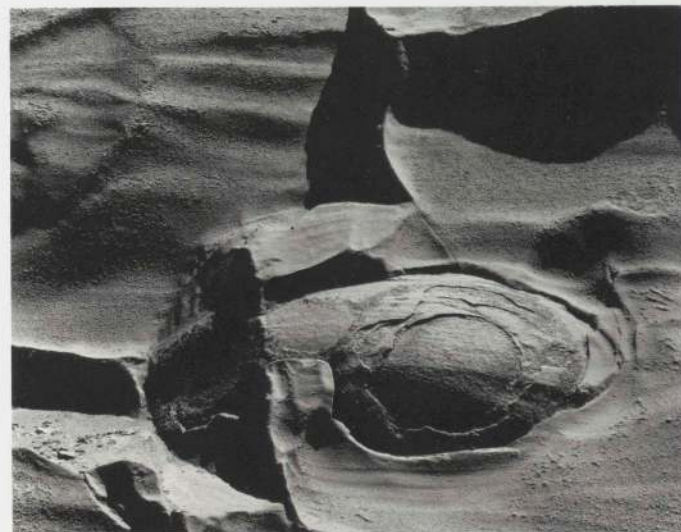


56. Pavilion, New York  
June 8, 1958 (58-126P)

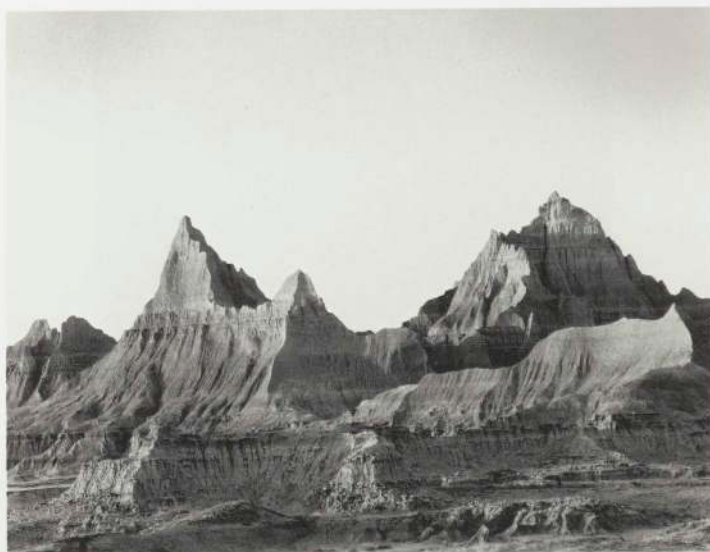




57. Stony Brook State Park, New York  
September 1958 (58-296)



58. Shore Acres State Park, Oregon  
Early August 1959 (59-102)



59. Badlands, South Dakota  
September 15, 1959 (59-223)



60. Stony Brook State Park, New York  
November 20, 1959 (59-290A)





61. Stony Brook State Park, New York  
January 1, 1960 (60-10)



62. Point Lobos, California  
August 1960 (60-230)



63. Zion National Park, Utah  
September 1960 (60-309)

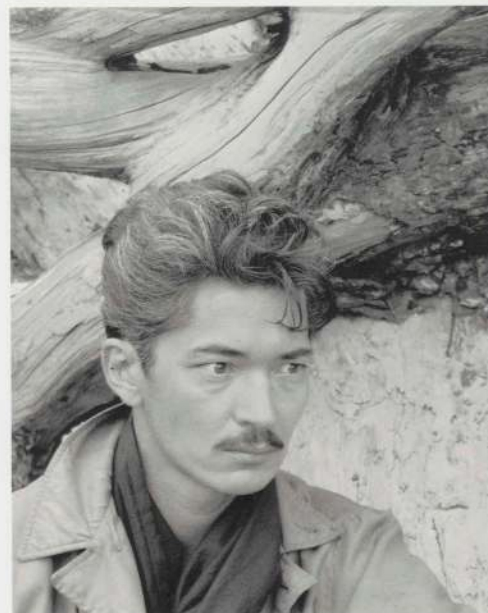


64. Highway Canyon, Capitol Reef, Utah  
July 1961 (61-29)





65. Middle Canyon, Capitol Reef, Utah  
July 1961 (61-44)



66. William LaRue, Cape Mears, Oregon  
August 1961 (Polaroid)



67. Vicinity of Rochester  
February 1962 (62-8)



68. Silver Plume, Colorado  
June 1962 (62-28)



69. Drid Williams, Capitol Reef, Utah  
September 1-6, 1962 (62-108)



70. Notom, Utah  
July 9, 1963 (63-17)

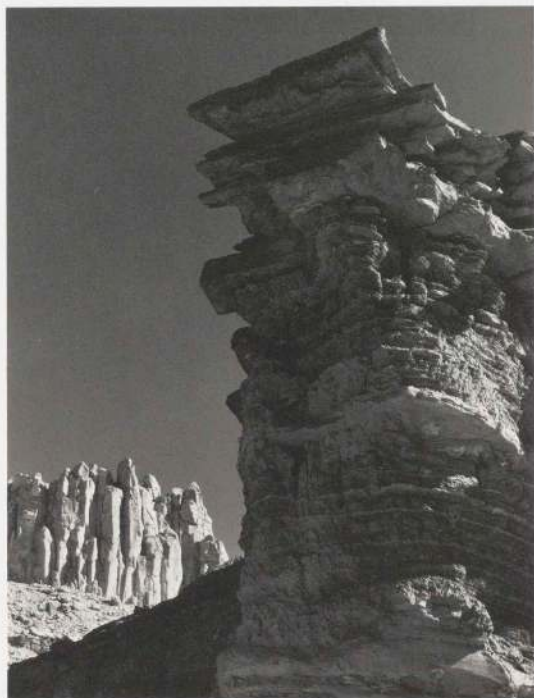


71. Lake Tenaya, California  
July 1963 (63-33)

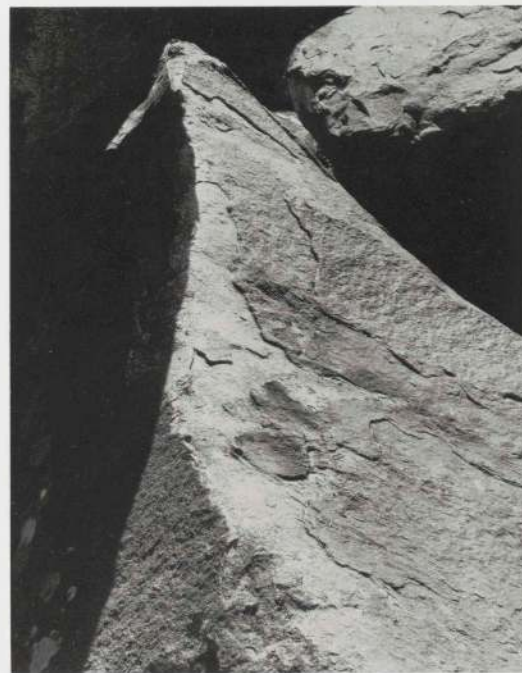


72. Fremont River, Capitol Reef, Utah  
September 1963 (63-93)





73. Castle Rock, Capitol Reef, Utah  
September 5-17, 1964 (64-77)



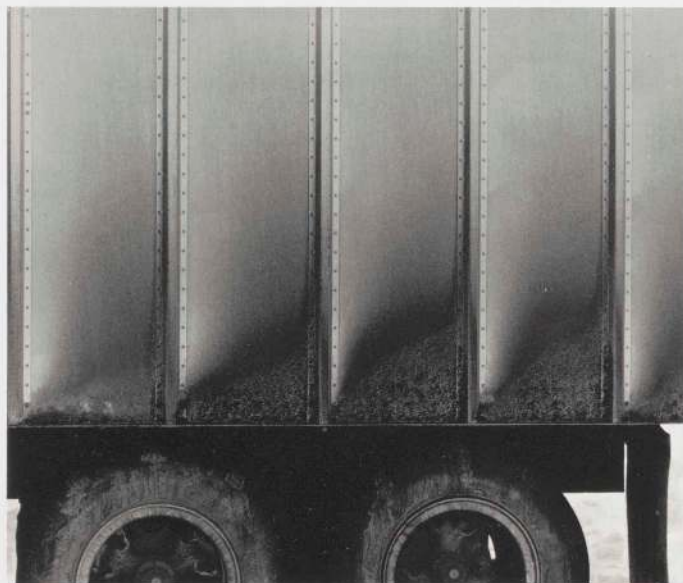
74. Henry Mountains, Utah  
September 1964 (64-112)



75. 203 Park Avenue, Arlington, Massachusetts  
1965 (65-14)



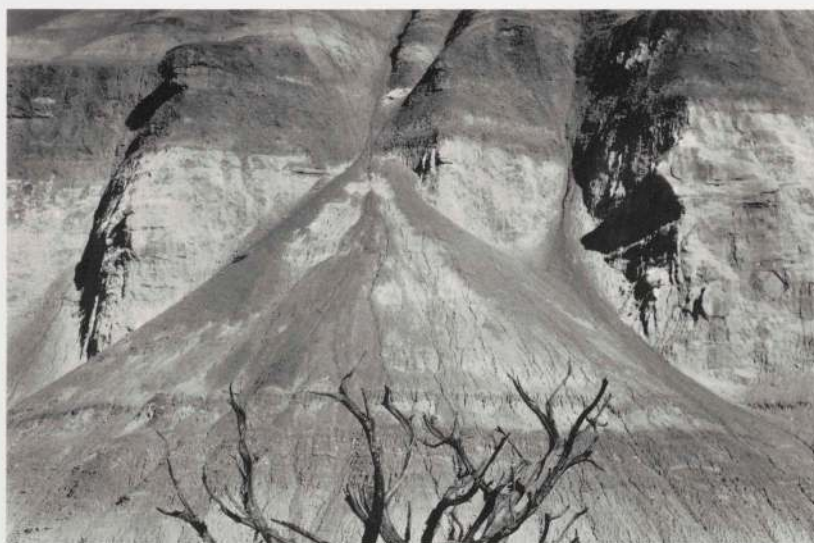
76. Arthur Lazar, Arlington  
1965 (65-41.5)



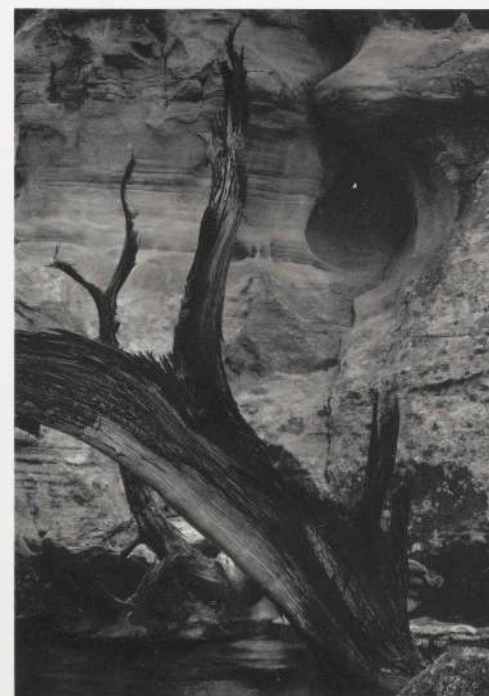
77. Portland, Maine  
February 1966 (66-5)



78. Eel Creek, Oregon  
August 1966 (66-143)

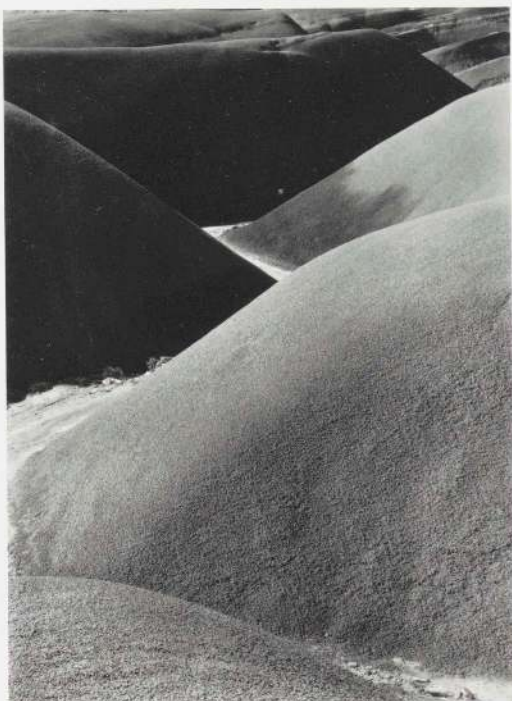


79. Cathedral Valley, Utah  
September 10 or 11, 1966 (66-219)



80. Cohab Trail, Utah  
Early September 1967 (67-39B)





81. Notom, Utah  
September 9, 1967 (67-56)



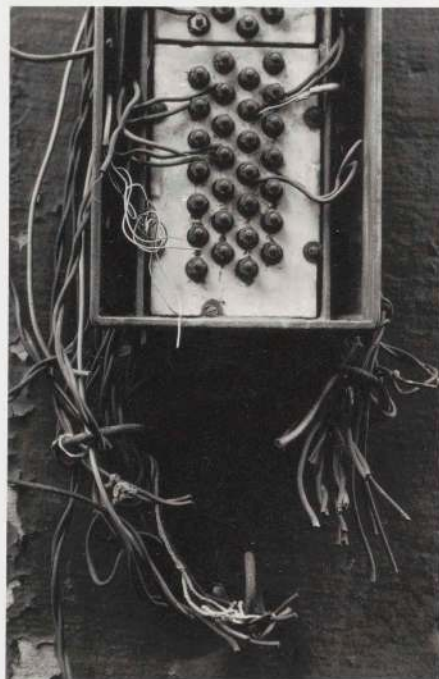
82. Lincoln, Vermont  
August 1968 (68-16)



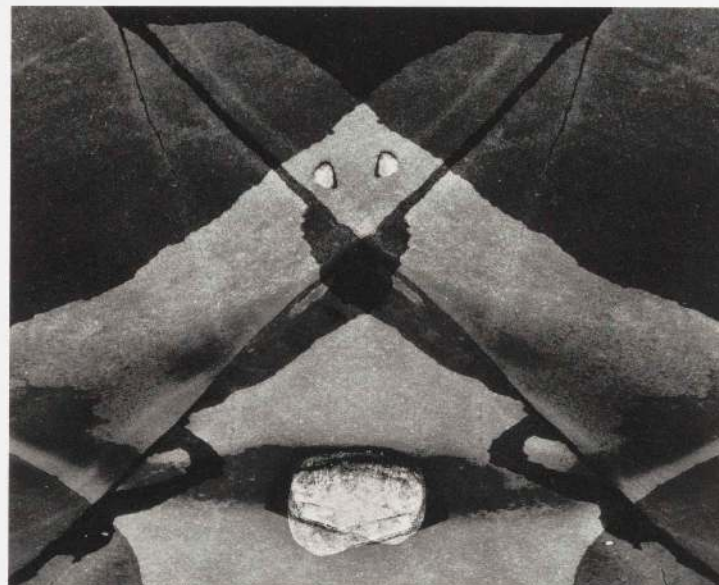
83. Lanesville, Massachusetts  
September 1968 (68-35)



84. Haymarket, Boston  
July 8, 1969 (69-11)



85. Haymarket, Boston  
July 13, 1969 (69-30)



86. Schoodic Point, Maine  
July 15, 1969 (69-47)



87. Vicinity of Lincoln, Vermont, with  
Texas Falls, Vermont  
Late October 1970 (70-16)



88. Halibut Point, Cape Ann, Massachusetts  
October 1971 (71-9.2)





89. Vicinity of Woodstock, Vermont  
October 1971 (71-23)



90. Cape Breton, Nova Scotia  
September 1972 (72-11)



91. Nova Scotia  
September 1972 (72-24)



92. Old Town, San Juan, Puerto Rico  
January 1973 (73-42)



93. Tom Schuyler, Lakeville, Connecticut  
June 20, 1973 (Polaroid)



94. China Basin, San Francisco  
July 12, 1973 (73-125)

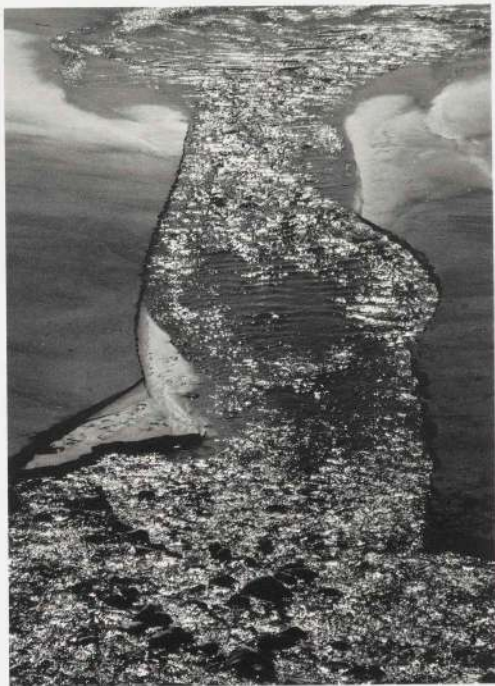


95. Ben's Beach, Peru  
August 24, 1973 (73-262)



96. Rome, Italy  
January 1974 (74-94.23)





97. York Beach, Maine  
April 16, 1974 (74-7.1)



98. Haymarket, Boston  
February 5 or 6, 1975 (75-22.8)



99. Lincoln Cathedral, Lincoln, England  
November 1975 (75-98.12)



100. 203 Park Avenue, Arlington  
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# CHECKLIST OF THE EXHIBITION

The one hundred and seventy-five black and white and ten color photographs reproduced in the two portfolios of this book constitute the exhibition. The checklist gives the title and/or descriptive information on each image, date of the exposure, names and versions of sequences and other photographic projects in which the image appears, size and date of the print, mounting and signature information, the Minor White Archive number for the image, and the size of the negative. All photographs are from the Minor White Archive unless noted.

The titles of the photographs derive from those written by Minor White on his proof cards, finished prints, or in one of his publications. Additional information follows in parentheses. For works with italicized poetic titles or works with personal names as titles, the location of the exposure is cited. For works identified by location, descriptive information is provided if noted by Minor White on his proof card. Sequence and other project information is based on the holdings of the Minor White Archive, and the inclusion of an image in a sequence version is indicated only if verifiable in the archive's records. The titles of finished projects are italicized; unfinished projects are quoted.

The size of the print is provided in inches with height preceding width. The date of a print is described as vintage or later and is recorded with verification of the artist's mounting and inscription. "Vintage print" indicates a print made at approximately the same time as the negative. "Later print" is a print realized five or more years after the exposure. All black and white prints are gelatin silver.

The Minor White Archive number for each image is given in parentheses. It is followed by the size of the negative, which is given in inches unless noted. However, the dimensions do not reflect the orientation of the negative. If several negatives exist of an image, differing only in exposure density and thus making it difficult to discern which White printed, each exposure is listed. When no negative exists in the archive, it is indicated.

1. David Ulan (Arlington, Massachusetts)  
November 5, 1975  
7<sup>15</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 9<sup>15</sup>/<sub>16</sub>"  
Vintage print  
(75-91.4), 2<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 2<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>"
2. 72 N. Union Street, Rochester (The Chimney Next Door)  
August 1956  
7<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 9<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub>"  
Vintage print  
(56-6), 4 x 5"
3. Mouth of the Russian River, California (Beach)  
April 24, 1949  
7 x 9<sup>9</sup>/<sub>16</sub>"  
Vintage print, mounted  
(49-320), 4 x 5"
4. *Double Navel* ("Woman Holding Bottom," Point Lobos, California)  
February 25, 1947  
From *Second Sequence / Amputations*, 1947 version  
4<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 3<sup>11</sup>/<sub>16</sub>"  
Vintage print, mounted  
(47-75), 4 x 5"
5. Lake Tenaya, California (Juniper)  
August 31, 1964  
From *Everything Gets in the Way*, 1965 versions 1 and 2  
13<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 8<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub>"  
Later print, mounted  
(64-55), 4 x 5"
6. Museo del Padre Soriano, Huraz, Peru  
September 1, 1973  
From *Sequence 9 / On the Deaths of My Fathers*, 1975  
7<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 6<sup>1</sup>/<sub>16</sub>"  
Vintage print, mounted  
(73-254), 4 x 5"
7. Mark Adams (San Francisco)  
July 12, 1950  
From *Fifth Sequence*, 1950 versions 1, 3, and 4; and *Sequence 13 / Return to the Bud*, 1959  
5<sup>7</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 6<sup>15</sup>/<sub>16</sub>"  
Later print, mounted  
(50-186), 4 x 5"
8. Portland  
1939  
10<sup>7</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 13<sup>9</sup>/<sub>16</sub>"  
Vintage print  
(39-1264), no negative exists
9. Potrero Hill, San Francisco  
February 24, 1951  
From *Sequence 6*, 1951; "Ashes Are for Burning," 1958; and *Sequence 13 / Return to the Bud*, 1959  
7<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 9<sup>9</sup>/<sub>16</sub>"  
Vintage print, mounted and signed  
(51-8), 4 x 5"
10. Vermilion Cliffs, Arizona  
September 1960  
7<sup>5</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 9<sup>5</sup>/<sub>16</sub>"  
Vintage print  
(60-314B), no negative exists
11. Mendocino, California  
1948  
From *Mendocino*, 1948; *Sequence 12 / Doors*, 1957; "Ashes Are for Burning," 1958; and *Sequence 13 / Return to the Bud*, 1959  
6<sup>11</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 4<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub>"  
Vintage print, mounted  
(48-51), 4 x 5"
12. Nata Paskowski (Point Lobos, California)  
March 16, 1950  
3<sup>9</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 4<sup>11</sup>/<sub>16</sub>"  
Vintage print  
(50-1860), no negative exists
13. William LaRue (Brett Weston's House, Carmel Highlands, California)  
September 2, 1959  
From *Sequence 15A*, October 1959 versions 1 and 2, November 1959 versions 1, 2, and 3; and *Sequence 17 / Out of My Love for You I Will Try to Give You Back to*



- Yourself*, 1963 versions 1 and 2, and 1964 version  
7½ x 8⅞"  
Vintage print, mounted  
(59-146), 4 x 5"
14. Earle Curtis (Vicinity of La Grande, Oregon)  
Summer 1941  
3½ x 4"  
Vintage print  
(41-140A), 4 x 5"
15. Gino Cipolla (Portland, Oregon)  
1940  
4⅜ x 3½"  
Vintage print, mounted  
(40-676), 4 x 5"
16. Portland  
1940  
3⅞ x 2½"  
Vintage print  
(40-658), 3 x 4"
17. Tim Asch (Little Sur, California)  
August 15, 1951  
From *Sequence 8*, 1952 versions 1, 2, 4, 5, and 6  
7¾ x 9½"  
Later print  
(51-227), 4 x 5"
18. Tom Murphy (San Francisco)  
December 11, 1947  
From *The Temptation of Saint Anthony Is Mirrors*, 1948 version 2; *Sequence 13 / Return to the Bud*, 1959; and *Amputations / Last Will and Minor Testament*, 1974  
5½ x 4⅞"  
Vintage print  
(47-243), 4 x 5"
19. William Smith (Stinson Beach, California)  
March 20, 1953  
7⅜ x 7⅝"  
Later print  
(53-61), 2¼ x 2¼"
20. Navarro River, California  
December 30, 1947  
4⅞ x 3⅞"  
Vintage print, mounted  
(47-250A or B), two 4 x 5"
21. Stony Brook State Park, New York  
January 1960  
From *Sequence 16 / Steely the Barb of Infinity*, 1961 versions 1 and 2, and 1963 version  
9½ x 12⅞"  
Later print  
(60-23), 4 x 5"
22. Shore Acres, Oregon  
August 1960  
From *Sequence 16 / Steely the Barb of Infinity*, 1961 version 2, and 1963 version  
9 x 7⅝"  
Later print  
(60-187), 4 x 5"
23. Gallery Gully, Capitol Reef, Utah  
September 1963  
7⅞ x 9⅝"  
Vintage print, mounted  
(63-67), 4 x 5"
24. Navarro River, California  
December 30, 1947  
3½ x 4½"  
Vintage print, mounted and initialed  
(47-252), 4 x 5"  
Lent by Peter C. Bunnell
25. *Sculptured Birds* (Cape Mears, Oregon)  
August 1964  
From *Everything Gets in the Way*, 1965 versions 1 and 2  
11⅝ x 8½"  
Later print, mounted and signed  
(64-45), 4 x 5"
26. Gallery Cove, Point Lobos, California  
February 26, 1948  
From *Third Sequence / Knotholes and Doorknobs*, 1948 versions 2, 3, and 4  
8 x 10"  
Vintage print  
(48-144), 4 x 5"
27. Schoodic, Maine  
July 15, 1969  
From *Sequence 1970*, versions 1 and 2; and *Totemic Sequence*, 1974  
8¼ x 10⅞"  
Later print  
(69-49), 4 x 5"
28. Eel Creek, Oregon  
August 1966  
8 x 12⅞"  
Vintage print, mounted and signed  
(66-145B), no negative exists
29. Barbara Spencer (Portland)  
1940  
10⅞ x 11⅝"  
Vintage print  
(40-649), 4 x 5"
30. Pavilion, New York  
June 21, 1958  
7⅝ x 9⅝"  
Vintage print, mounted  
(58-138A or B), two 4 x 5"
31. Market Street, San Francisco  
July 25, 1950  
7⅞ x 7⅞"  
Vintage print  
(50-257), 2¼ x 2¼"
32. Ernest Stones and Robert Bright (San Francisco)  
1949  
2¾ x 3"  
Vintage print, mounted  
(49-2342 I), 4 x 5"
33. Warehouse Area, San Francisco  
July 9, 1949  
From "The Lion and the Wayward Bag," 1949; *Sequence 12 / Doors*, 1957; and *Sequence 13 / Return to the Bud*, 1959  
10⅞ x 11¾"  
Vintage print  
(49-704), 2¼ x 2¼"
34. Mission District, San Francisco  
February 24, 1949  
From *Intimations of Disaster*, 1949 version 1, and 1952 version  
11½ x 10⅜"  
Vintage print  
(49-85), 2¼ x 2¼"
35. Weston Beach, Point Lobos, California  
February 25, 1948  
From *Fourth Sequence*, 1950 versions 1 and 2  
7⅜ x 9⅞"  
Vintage print, mounted  
(48-155), 4 x 5"



36. *Two Forms Moving Left & Right* (Point Lobos, California)  
March 14, 1950  
From *Fourth Sequence*, 1950 versions 1 and 2  
9<sup>7</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 7<sup>5</sup>/<sub>16</sub>"  
Vintage print, mounted  
(50-61), 4 x 5"
37. San Mateo County, California (Coast, Used Vertical)  
November 4, 1947  
From *Song Without Words*, 1948 versions 1, 2, and 3, 1949 and 1961 versions; and *These Images*, 1950 versions 1 and 2  
4<sup>11</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 3<sup>11</sup>/<sub>16</sub>"  
Vintage print, mounted and signed  
(47-190), 4 x 5"
38. *Evil Plants* (Vaca-Dixon P.G.E. Substation, Circuit Breaker Insulators, California)  
February 3, 1947  
From *Second Sequence/Amputations*, 1947 and 1948 versions  
4<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 3<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>"  
Vintage print, mounted  
(47-33), 4 x 5"
39. Point Lobos, California  
March 14, 1950  
From "Ashes Are for Burning," 1958; and *Sequence 13 / Return to the Bud*, 1959  
8<sup>13</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 5<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>"  
Vintage print, mounted and signed  
(50-71), 4 x 5"
40. *Sandstone Eye Number 1* (Point Lobos, California)  
March 14, 1950  
From *Fourth Sequence*, 1950 versions 1 and 2  
7<sup>5</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 9<sup>7</sup>/<sub>16</sub>"  
Vintage print, mounted  
(50-66), 4 x 5"
41. Gallery Cove, Point Lobos, California  
March 6, 1948  
From *Sequence 11 / The Young Man as Mystic*, 1955  
7<sup>3</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 9<sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub>"  
Vintage print  
(48-176), 4 x 5"
42. Tom Murphy (San Francisco)  
May 26, 1948  
From *The Temptation of Saint Anthony Is Mirrors*, 1948 version 2  
4<sup>5</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 4<sup>15</sup>/<sub>16</sub>"  
Vintage print, mounted  
(48-209), 4 x 5"
43. Ponce, Puerto Rico (Cemetery)  
Late January 1973  
From "Neptune Portfolio," 1975  
8<sup>15</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 11<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub>"  
Vintage print, signed  
(73-16), 4 x 5"
44. *Windowsill Daydreaming* (Front Room, 72 N. Union Street, Rochester)  
July 20, 1958  
From "Ashes Are for Burning," 1958; *Sequence 13 / Return to the Bud*, 1959; *Sequence 14 / Sound of One Hand*, 1960 versions 1, 2, and 3, 1965 version; and *Jupiter Portfolio*, 1975  
12<sup>5</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 9<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>"  
Later print, signed  
(58-171), 4 x 5"  
The Art Museum, Princeton University. Gift of David Hunter McAlpin, Class of 1920.
45. Vicinity of Capitol Reef, Utah  
Mid-September 1964  
9<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 6<sup>15</sup>/<sub>16</sub>"  
Vintage print, mounted and signed  
(64-88), 4 x 5"
46. Robert Bright (San Pedro Point Marker, California)  
October 19, 1947  
From *Song Without Words*, 1948 versions 1, 2, and 3, 1949 and 1961 versions; *These Images*, 1950 versions 1 and 2  
5<sup>7</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 6<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>"  
Vintage print  
(47-175), 4 x 5"
47. Cape Breton, Nova Scotia (Navigation Marker)  
September 1970  
From "Navigation Markers Group," 1973; and *Jupiter Portfolio*, 1975  
8<sup>3</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 10<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub>"  
Vintage print, signed  
(70-12A and 70-12B), two 4 x 5"
48. *Autumn Solstice* (Capitol Reef, Utah)  
September 1961  
From *It's All in the Mind*, 1967 version 2  
8<sup>3</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 11<sup>1</sup>/<sub>16</sub>"  
Later print  
(61-58), 4 x 5"
49. *Empty Head* (72 N. Union Street, Rochester)  
March 1962  
From *Sequence 14 / Sound of One Hand*, 1965  
11<sup>15</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 9<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>"  
Later print, signed  
(62-9A or B), two 4 x 5"  
The Art Museum, Princeton University. Gift of David Hunter McAlpin, Class of 1920.
50. Drid Williams (Capitol Reef, Utah)  
September 2-6, 1962  
From *Sequence 17 / Out of My Love for You I Will Try to Give You Back to Yourself*, 1963 versions 1 and 2, and 1964 version  
8<sup>3</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 6<sup>11</sup>/<sub>16</sub>"  
Vintage print, mounted  
(62-104), 4 x 5"
51. China Basin, San Francisco (Trailer Truck Dock)  
July 8, 1973  
11<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> x 8<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>"  
Vintage print, signed  
(73-106), 4 x 5"
52. Tom Murphy (San Francisco)  
February 1948  
From *The Temptation of Saint Anthony Is Mirrors*, 1948 versions 1 and 2  
7<sup>11</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 6"  
Later print  
(48-137), 4 x 5"
53. 72 N. Union Street, Rochester  
March 1960  
From *Sequence 16 / Steely the Barb of Infinity*, 1960 versions 1 and 2, 1961 versions 1 and 2, 1963 version, and 1965 version  
12 x 8"  
Later print, mounted  
(60-52A or B), two 4 x 5"
54. Cedar and Laguna Streets, San Francisco (Fillmore District)  
September 30, 1948  
From *Third Sequence / Knotholes and Doorknobs*, 1948 versions 1, 3, 4, and 5  
7<sup>7</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 6<sup>3</sup>/<sub>16</sub>"  
Vintage print, mounted  
(48-380), 4 x 5"
55. *Self Portrait* (West Bloomfield, New York)  
December 2, 1957  
7<sup>1</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 8<sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub>"  
Vintage print, mounted  
(57-100), 4 x 5"



56. 72 N. Union Street, Rochester  
January 18, 1958  
9<sup>7</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 7<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub>"  
Vintage print  
(58-398), no negative exists
57. Rye Beach, New Hampshire (Bill Smith)  
December 25, 1966  
8<sup>1</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 13<sup>1</sup>/<sub>16</sub>"  
Vintage print, mounted and signed  
(66-233B), 4 x 5"
58. Capitol Reef, Utah (Moenkopi Strata)  
Late June 1962  
12 x 9<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub>"  
Vintage print, signed  
(62-98.2), 4 x 5"
59. Henry Mountains, Utah  
Early September 1966  
From *It's All in the Mind*, 1967 version 2  
8<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 12<sup>7</sup>/<sub>16</sub>"  
Vintage print, mounted  
(66-79), 2<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 3<sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub>"
60. Grande Ronde Valley, Oregon  
1940  
From "Grande Ronde Valley Series," 1941  
Vintage print, mounted and signed  
7<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 9<sup>9</sup>/<sub>16</sub>"  
(40-616), no negative exists
61. Shore Acres, Oregon  
Summer 1960  
Vintage print  
7<sup>7</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 9<sup>7</sup>/<sub>16</sub>"  
(60-174), 4 x 5"
62. Boundary Mountain, Benton, California (Benton Cut-off)  
September 8, 1959  
From *Sequence 15A*, October 1959 versions 1 and 2, and  
November 1959 versions 1, 2, and 3  
10<sup>3</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 12<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>"  
Vintage print, mounted  
(59-183A or B), two 4 x 5"
63. Water Street, Portland (Foundry)  
January 10, 1940  
From "Neptune Portfolio," 1975  
7<sup>9</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 8<sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub>"  
Vintage print  
(40-47), 3 x 4"
64. S.W. Front Avenue, Portland  
1940  
From *First Portfolio / A Portfolio of Historic Buildings in Portland, Oregon*, 1939  
13<sup>9</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 10<sup>9</sup>/<sub>16</sub>"  
Vintage print, mounted  
(40-625), no negative exists
65. Post and Webster Streets, San Francisco (Japanese Church)  
December 1, 1949  
10 x 7<sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub>"  
Later print, mounted and signed  
(49-580), 4 x 5"
66. Bush Street, San Francisco (Maimonides Health Center)  
February 20, 1950  
From *Sequence 13 / Return to the Bud*, 1959  
9<sup>7</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 6<sup>7</sup>/<sub>16</sub>"  
Vintage print, mounted  
(50-25), 4 x 5"
67. 1412 Webster Street, San Francisco (Between Geary and O'Farrell)  
September 30, 1948  
From *Sequence 12 / Doors*, 1957; and "Ashes Are for Burning," 1958  
11<sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 7<sup>3</sup>/<sub>16</sub>"  
Vintage print, signed  
(48-370), 4 x 5"
68. Haymarket, Boston  
January 1975  
6<sup>5</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 8<sup>1</sup>/<sub>16</sub>"  
Vintage print  
(75-6.8), 2<sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 2<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>"
69. Benicia, California (Rear of Thompson Lumber Yard)  
February 11, 1948  
7<sup>5</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 9<sup>5</sup>/<sub>16</sub>"  
Vintage print  
(48-108), 4 x 5"
70. Piazza Navona, Rome, Italy  
January 1974  
8<sup>15</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 5<sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub>"  
Vintage print  
(74-95.17), 35mm
71. Sansome and California Streets, San Francisco  
February 15, 1949  
13<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 10<sup>9</sup>/<sub>16</sub>"  
Vintage print, signed  
(49-65), 2<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 2<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>"
72. Chinatown, San Francisco  
February 17, 1953  
7<sup>7</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 7<sup>13</sup>/<sub>16</sub>"  
Vintage print  
(53-634), 2<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 2<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>"
73. Powell and Market Streets, San Francisco  
July 16, 1953  
From *Sequence 9 / On the Deaths of My Fathers*, 1975  
6<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 9<sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub>"  
Vintage print, mounted  
(52-122B), 2<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 2<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>"
74. San Francisco  
September 9, 1950  
7<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> x 9<sup>7</sup>/<sub>16</sub>"  
Vintage print  
(50-1246), 2<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 2<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>"
75. San Francisco (Produce Market)  
August 26, 1949  
7<sup>5</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 7<sup>7</sup>/<sub>16</sub>"  
Vintage print  
(49-703), 2<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 2<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>"
76. *Little Girl Found* (Produce Area, San Francisco)  
Summer 1949  
From "San Francisco Marketplace," 1949(?)  
7<sup>3</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 7<sup>5</sup>/<sub>16</sub>"  
Vintage print  
(49-685), 2<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 2<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>"
77. McAllister Street, San Francisco  
September 9, 1950  
7<sup>9</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 7<sup>9</sup>/<sub>16</sub>"  
Vintage print  
(50-1332), 2<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 2<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>"
78. San Francisco  
October 1, 1949  
5<sup>9</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 9<sup>1</sup>/<sub>16</sub>"  
Vintage print, mounted and signed  
(49-1636), 2<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 2<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>"
79. Barbara Zrnich (Marin County, California)  
November 15, 1951  
7<sup>5</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 8<sup>5</sup>/<sub>16</sub>"  
Vintage print  
(51-256), 2<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 2<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>"



80. Chinatown, San Francisco  
February 16, 1950  
7<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 7<sup>9</sup>/<sub>16</sub>"  
Vintage print  
(50-261), 2<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 2<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>"
81. Fillmore District, San Francisco  
December 1, 1949  
7<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 7<sup>9</sup>/<sub>16</sub>"  
Vintage print  
(49-2104), 2<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 2<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>"
82. Fillmore District, San Francisco  
December 1, 1949  
7<sup>7</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 7<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>"  
Vintage print  
(49-683), 2<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 2<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>"
83. *Movement Studies Number 56* (Huntington Hotel, Taylor Street, San Francisco)  
August 24, 1949  
8<sup>11</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 7<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>"  
Later print, mounted and signed  
(49-530), 4 x 5"
84. Huraz, Peru  
September 2, 1973  
9 x 10<sup>5</sup>/<sub>16</sub>"  
Vintage print, mounted  
(73-256A or B), two 4 x 5"
85. "Metamorphosis" - *Kafka* (Crane Hook, P.G.E. Substation, Newark, California)  
February 7, 1947  
From *Second Sequence / Amputations*, 1947 version; and *Third Sequence / Knotholes and Doorknobs*, 1948 version 2  
4<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 3<sup>9</sup>/<sub>16</sub>"  
Vintage print, mounted  
(47-44), 4 x 5"
86. Chinatown, San Francisco  
February 16, 1950  
7<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 7<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub>"  
Vintage print  
(50-277), 2<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 2<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>"
87. Chinatown, San Francisco (Downtown)  
July 11, 1973  
9<sup>3</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 11<sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub>"  
Vintage print  
(73-118A or B), two 4 x 5"
88. Columbus Avenue, San Francisco (P.G.E. Sandblaster, vicinity of Broadway)  
February 15, 1949  
From *Intimations of Disaster*, 1949 version 1, 1950 and 1952 versions; "Ashes Are for Burning," 1958; *Sequence 13 / Return to the Bud*, 1959; and *Jupiter Portfolio*, 1975  
9<sup>1</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 11<sup>7</sup>/<sub>16</sub>"  
Vintage print, signed  
(49-78.1), 2<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 2<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>"
89. Rochester  
August 23, 1954  
From *Sequence 9*, 1954 version 1; and "Ashes Are for Burning," 1958  
7 x 9"  
Vintage print, mounted  
(54-54), 4 x 5"
90. Steamboat Lake, Wallowa Mountains, Oregon  
September 1941  
From "Wallowa Mountains Series," 1941; and "Ashes Are for Burning," 1958  
7<sup>11</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 9<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>"  
Vintage print  
(41-4A or B), two 4 x 5"
91. Cabbage Hill, Oregon (Grande Ronde Valley)  
June or July 1941  
7<sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 9"  
Vintage print, mounted and signed  
(41-33), 4 x 5"
92. *The Sound of One Hand Clapping* (Pultneyville, New York)  
October 10, 1957  
From "Ashes Are for Burning" 1958; *Sequence 13 / Return to the Bud*, 1959; *Sequence 14 / Sound of One Hand*, 1960 versions 1, 2, and 3, and 1965 version  
7<sup>5</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 9<sup>1</sup>/<sub>16</sub>"  
Vintage print  
(57-25B), 4 x 5"
93. Bean Hollow State Park, California  
September 2, 1959  
From *Sequence 15A*, October 1959 versions 1 and 2, November 1959 versions 1, 2, and 3; and *Sequence 17 / Out of My Love for You I Will Try to Give You Back to Yourself*, 1963 versions 1 and 2  
7<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 9<sup>5</sup>/<sub>16</sub>"  
Vintage print, mounted  
(59-155), 4 x 5"
94. Capitol Reef, Utah (Highway Canyon)  
Early July 1961  
From *Sequence 17 / Out of My Love for You I Will Try to Give You Back to Yourself*, 1963 versions 1 and 2, and 1964 version  
9<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 9<sup>5</sup>/<sub>16</sub>"  
Vintage print, signed  
(61-28A or B), two 4 x 5"
95. William LaRue (Point Lobos, California)  
August 1960  
From *Sequence 15B*, 1960; and *Sequence 17 / Out of My Love for You I Will Try to Give You Back to Yourself*, 1963 version 1  
8<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 7<sup>11</sup>/<sub>16</sub>"  
Vintage print, mounted  
(60-241), 4 x 5"
96. *For Edward Weston* (Fall Creek, vicinity of Geneseo, New York)  
January 3, 1958  
From "Ashes Are for Burning," 1958; *Sequence 13 / Return to the Bud*, 1959  
10<sup>9</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 13<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>"  
Vintage print  
(58-2A, B, or C), three 4 x 5"
97. North Wall Beach, Point Lobos, California  
May 5, 1949  
From *Sequence 8*, 1952 versions 1, 2, 3, 5, and 6  
7<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 9<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub>"  
Vintage print, mounted  
(49-341), 4 x 5"
98. Chatham Street, Haymarket, Boston (Curley's)  
July 7, 1969  
9<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 6<sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub>"  
Vintage print, mounted and signed  
(69-2), 2<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 3"
99. North Wall, Point Lobos, California  
December 10, 1946  
From *Second Sequence / Amputations*, 1947 version  
3<sup>11</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 4<sup>11</sup>/<sub>16</sub>"  
Vintage print, mounted  
(46-132), 4 x 5"
100. *Abstraction* (Stony Brook State Park, New York)  
October 1958  
From *Sequence 13 / Return to the Bud*, 1959  
7<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 9<sup>7</sup>/<sub>16</sub>"  
Vintage print  
(58-299), 4 x 5"



101. Goblin Valley Road, San Rafael Desert, Utah  
(South end)  
Mid-September 1964  
From *Everything Gets in the Way*, 1965 versions 1 and 2  
8<sup>13</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 11<sup>9</sup>/<sub>16</sub>"  
Vintage print, mounted  
(64-122A or B), two 4 x 5"
102. Lincoln, Vermont (Barn)  
Mid-August 1968  
5<sup>9</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 8<sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub>"  
Vintage print  
(68-13), 4 x 5"
103. Rome, Italy  
January 1974  
8<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 6<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>"  
Vintage print  
(74-122.5), 2<sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 2<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>"
104. Vermont  
July or August 1969  
8<sup>1</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 11<sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub>"  
Vintage print, mounted and signed  
(69-91A), 4 x 5"
105. Aquatic Park, San Francisco  
October 23, 1949  
10<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 12<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub>"  
Vintage print  
(49-1707), 2<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 2<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>"
106. Chinatown, San Francisco  
February 16, 1953  
7<sup>9</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 8<sup>9</sup>/<sub>16</sub>"  
Vintage print  
(53-388), 2<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 2<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>"
107. Portland  
1938  
4<sup>5</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 3<sup>9</sup>/<sub>16</sub>"  
Later print  
(38-683), 1<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 2<sup>3</sup>/<sub>16</sub>"
108. Haymarket, Boston  
October 11, 1974  
From "Neptune Portfolio," 1975  
6<sup>1</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 7<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>"  
Vintage print, mounted and signed  
(74-54), 3 x 4" Polaroid negative
109. Kamm Building, S.W. Front Avenue, Portland  
1939  
13<sup>7</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 9<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>"  
Vintage print, mounted  
(39-336), 4 x 5"
110. West 53d Street, New York City  
January or February 1946  
From the "Fifty Third Street Series," 1946  
4<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 3<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub>"  
Vintage print, mounted, signed, and initialed  
(46-13), 4 x 5"
111. Lake Road, Rochester (Bridge Construction)  
October 19, 1957  
From "Ashes Are for Burning," 1958; *Sequence 13 / Return to the Bud*, 1959  
7<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 9<sup>3</sup>/<sub>16</sub>"  
Vintage print, mounted  
(57-31), 4 x 5"
112. 72 N. Union Street, Rochester (Kitchen)  
Late August or September 1956  
12<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 9<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>"  
Vintage print, mounted and signed  
(56-10), 4 x 5"
113. *Dumb Face* (Window, 72 N. Union Street, Rochester)  
January 12, 1959  
From *Sequence 14 / Sound of One Hand*, 1960 versions 1, 2, and 3, and 1965 version  
12<sup>9</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 9<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>"  
Vintage print  
(59-4), 4 x 5"
114. Mendocino, California  
December 30, 1947  
From *Mendocino*, 1948; *Sequence 12 / Doors*, 1957; and *Sequence 13 / Return to the Bud*, 1959  
9 x 7<sup>1</sup>/<sub>16</sub>"  
Vintage print, mounted and signed  
(47-257), 4 x 5"
115. Vicinity of Naples, New York (Country Road Towards Italy, New York)  
October 1955  
From *Sequence 10 / Rural Cathedrals*, 1955 versions 1, 2, and 3  
7<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> x 9<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>"  
Vintage print, mounted and signed  
(55-44), 4 x 5"
116. Haags Alley, Rochester  
February 1960  
From *Sequence 16 / Steely the Barb of Infinity*, 1960 versions 1 and 2, 1961 versions 1 and 2, 1963 and 1965 versions  
7<sup>9</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 7<sup>5</sup>/<sub>16</sub>"  
Vintage print, mounted and signed  
(60-47), 4 x 5"
117. Ladd and Tilton Building, S.W. Front Avenue, Portland  
1939  
9<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> x 7<sup>11</sup>/<sub>16</sub>"  
Vintage print  
(39-1249), no negative exists
118. Front Street, San Francisco (Jackson and Clark)  
April 15, 1951  
From *Sequence 6*, 1951; "Ashes Are for Burning," 1958; and *Sequence 13 / Return to the Bud*, 1959  
7<sup>7</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 9<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>"  
Later print, mounted and signed  
(51-41), 4 x 5"
119. Rochester Junction, New York  
November 21, 1959  
7<sup>1</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 9<sup>5</sup>/<sub>16</sub>"  
Vintage print  
(59-270A or B), two 4 x 5"
120. Devil's Slide, San Mateo County, California (Highway 1)  
October 19, 1948  
From *Song Without Words*, 1948 version 2, 1961 and 1965 versions; *These Images*, 1950 versions 1 and 2; "Ashes Are for Burning," 1958; *Sequence 13 / Return to the Bud*, 1959; and *Jupiter Portfolio*, 1975  
6<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 8<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>"  
Vintage print, mounted and signed  
(48-421), 4 x 5"
121. Vicinity of Naples, New York  
October 1955  
From *Sequence 10 / Rural Cathedrals*, 1955 versions 1, 2, and 3  
10<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 13<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>"  
Vintage print, mounted  
(55-48), 4 x 5"
122. *Resurrection* (Peeled Paint on Window, Jackson Street, Produce Area, San Francisco)  
February 25, 1951  
From *Sequence 9*, 1954 versions 1 and 2; "Ashes Are for Burning," 1958; and *Sequence 13 / Return to the Bud*,



- 1959; and *Sequence 9 / On the Deaths of My Fathers*, 1975  
7<sup>5</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 9<sup>5</sup>/<sub>16</sub>"  
Vintage print, mounted  
(51-20), 4 x 5"
123. Vicinity of Lostine Creek, Oregon (Lake, Wallowa Mountains)  
Summer 1941  
From "Wallowa Mountains Series," 1941  
7<sup>1</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 8<sup>15</sup>/<sub>16</sub>"  
Vintage print, mounted and signed  
(41-15), 4 x 5"
124. Lake Almanar, California  
April 4, 1947  
From *Second Sequence / Amputations*, 1947 and 1948 versions; "Ashes Are for Burning," 1958; and *Sequence 13 / Return to the Bud*, 1959  
4<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 3<sup>11</sup>/<sub>16</sub>"  
Vintage print, mounted  
(47-100), 4 x 5"
125. Tom Murphy (San Francisco)  
February 1948  
From *The Temptation of Saint Anthony Is Mirrors*, 1948 versions 1 and 2  
4<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 3<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub>"  
Vintage print, mounted  
(48-136), 4 x 5"
126. Cypress Grove Trail, Point Lobos, California  
May 24, 1951  
From *Sequence 6*, 1951; "Ashes Are for Burning," 1958; *Sequence 13 / Return to the Bud*, 1959; and "Neptune Portfolio," 1975  
8<sup>15</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 6<sup>13</sup>/<sub>16</sub>"  
Vintage print, mounted  
(51-61), 4 x 5"
127. University Avenue, Rochester (Vicinity of the Post Office)  
Early June 1959  
From "Creative Cycle," 1969  
7 x 9"  
Vintage print  
(59-33A or B), two 4 x 5"
128. *Black Sun* (Atlantic Avenue, Rochester)  
January 1955  
From *Sequence 10 / Rural Cathedrals*, 1955 versions 1, 2, and 3  
7<sup>5</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 8<sup>5</sup>/<sub>16</sub>"  
Vintage print, mounted  
(55-21), 4 x 5" copy negative
129. William Smith (Rochester)  
January 4, 1957  
From "Ashes Are for Burning," 1958; *Sequence 13 / Return to the Bud*, 1959  
6<sup>7</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 7<sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub>"  
Vintage print  
(57-19), 4 x 5"
130. 72 N. Union Street, Rochester (Main Room)  
July 17, 1958  
From "Ashes Are for Burning," 1958  
9<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 7<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>"  
Vintage print  
(58-172), 4 x 5"
131. *Moment of Revelation* (Pebble Beach, Point Lobos, California)  
August 16, 1951  
From *Sequence 7*, 1951 and 1954 versions; *Sequence 8*, 1952 version 6; and "Ashes Are for Burning," 1958  
7<sup>7</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 9<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>"  
Vintage print, signed  
(51-248A or B), two 4 x 5"
132. *Ritual Branch* (72 N. Union Street, Rochester)  
December 8, 1958  
From *Sequence 13 / Return to the Bud*, 1959; *Sequence 14 / Sound of One Hand*, 1960 versions 1, 2, and 3, and 1965 version  
9<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 9<sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub>"  
Later print  
(58-313B), 4 x 5"
133. Parker Alley, Rochester  
February 15, 1958  
From *Sequence 13 / Return to the Bud*, 1959  
8<sup>1</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 5<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub>"  
Later print, signed  
(58-32), 4 x 5"
134. Herbert Hamilton (Rochester)  
1959  
4<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 3<sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub>"  
Vintage print  
(59-325), 4 x 5"
135. *Cross Form* (Devil's Spine, Coos Bay, Oregon)  
September 1963  
From *Sequence 15D*, 1962; and *Sequence 17 / Out of My Love for You I Will Try to Give You Back to Yourself*, 1963 versions 1 and 2, and 1964 version  
4<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 3<sup>7</sup>/<sub>16</sub>"  
Vintage print, mounted  
(62-73), 4 x 5"
136. Vicinity of Pescadero Beach, California  
July 19, 1951  
3<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 4<sup>9</sup>/<sub>16</sub>"  
Vintage print, mounted  
(51-160P), 4 x 5"
137. Wyoming, New York (Cemetery)  
November 16, 1957  
9 x 6<sup>3</sup>/<sub>16</sub>"  
Vintage print  
(57-78), 4 x 5"
138. Arlington  
October 1973  
5<sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 8<sup>9</sup>/<sub>16</sub>"  
Vintage print  
(73-352.4), 2<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 2<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>"
139. *Moon and Wall Encrustations* (Pultneyville, New York, Equivalent of Josh)  
May 10, 1964  
From "Creative Cycle," 1969; and *Jupiter Portfolio*, 1975  
7<sup>11</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 9<sup>11</sup>/<sub>16</sub>"  
Vintage print  
(64-6), 4 x 5"
140. Dan DeBoie (Radio Section, Oahu, Hawaii)  
December 20, 1942  
From "24th Infantry Division Series," 1942-43; *Second Sequence / Amputations*, 1947 and 1948 versions; and *Sequence 13 / Return to the Bud*, 1959  
3<sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 2<sup>15</sup>/<sub>16</sub>"  
Vintage print, mounted  
(42-15), 3 x 4"
141. Joyce Lancaster (San Francisco)  
August 4, 1951  
From *Sequence 7*, 1951 and 1954 versions; and *Sequence 13 / Return to the Bud*, 1959  
7<sup>3</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 9<sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub>"  
Vintage print, mounted  
(51-273A), 4 x 5"
142. *Beginnings* (72 N. Union Street, Rochester)  
February 1962  
From *Jupiter Portfolio*, 1975  
11<sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 9"  
Later print  
(62-10A or B), two 4 x 5"



143. S.W. Front Avenue and Madison Street, Portland  
1940  
7<sup>13</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 9<sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub>"  
Vintage print  
(40-108.9), 3 x 4"
144. Vicinity of Dansville, New York  
November 1955  
From *Sequence 10 / Rural Cathedrals*, 1955 versions 1, 2, and 3; *Sequence 13 / Return to the Bud*, 1959; and *Jupiter Portfolio*, 1975  
10<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> x 13<sup>5</sup>/<sub>16</sub>"  
Vintage print, mounted  
(55-50), 4 x 5"
145. Chilca Cemetery, Peru  
August 27, 1973  
From "Navigation Markers Group," 1973  
11<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 6<sup>11</sup>/<sub>16</sub>"  
Vintage print  
(73-231A or B), two 4 x 5"
146. Vicinity of Georgetown, Rocky Mountains, Colorado  
June 19, 1962  
From *Amputations / Last Will and Minor Testament*, 1974  
9<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> x 6<sup>13</sup>/<sub>16</sub>"  
Vintage print, mounted and signed  
(62-21), 4 x 5"
147. Santa Fe, New Mexico  
July 15-17, 1966  
12<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 6<sup>15</sup>/<sub>16</sub>"  
Vintage print, mounted and signed  
(66-67), 3 x 4"  
Lent by Peter C. Bunnell
148. Tom Murphy (San Francisco)  
February 1948  
From *The Temptation of Saint Anthony Is Mirrors*, 1948 versions 1 and 2  
4<sup>5</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 3<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub>"  
Vintage print, mounted  
(48-126), 4 x 5"
149. Letchworth State Park, New York  
October 1960  
From *Sequence 15B*, 1960; and *Sequence 17 / Out Of My Love for You I Will Try to Give You Back to Yourself*, 1963 version 1  
7<sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 9<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>"  
Vintage print, mounted and signed  
(60-333), 4 x 5"
150. Rochester  
June 1959  
From *Jupiter Portfolio*, 1975  
10<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 8<sup>7</sup>/<sub>16</sub>"  
Vintage print  
(59-51A or B), two 4 x 5"
151. Water Pocket Fold Canyon, Utah  
Late July or early September 1966  
From *It's All in the Mind*, 1967  
9 x 6<sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub>"  
Vintage print  
(66-124), 3 x 4"
152. Henry Mountains, Utah (Northwest Corner)  
Early July or mid-September 1964  
From *Everything Gets in the Way*, 1965 versions 1 and 2  
11<sup>13</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 8<sup>7</sup>/<sub>16</sub>"  
Vintage print, mounted and signed  
(64-111), 4 x 5"
153. Batavia, New York  
January 11, 1958  
From "Ashes Are for Burning," 1958; *Sequence 13 / Return to the Bud*, 1959; *Sequence 14 / Sound of One Hand*, 1960 versions 1, 2, and 3, and 1965 version  
13<sup>5</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 8<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub>"  
Vintage print, mounted and signed  
(58-8A or B), two 4 x 5"
154. Don Normark (Point Lobos, California)  
March 15, 1950  
From *Sequence 7*, 1954  
7<sup>5</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 9<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>"  
Vintage print  
(50-97), 4 x 5"
155. Weston Beach, Point Lobos, California  
April 16, 1952  
From *Sequence 8*, 1952 versions 1, 2, 4, 5, and 6  
7<sup>3</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 9<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>"  
Vintage print, mounted  
(52-4), 4 x 5"
156. Cohab Canyon, Utah  
Late July or early September 1966  
11<sup>11</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 9<sup>1</sup>/<sub>16</sub>"  
Vintage print, mounted  
(66-193), 4 x 5"
157. Battery Street, San Francisco (Parking Lot Across from Customs Building)  
December 3, 1952  
From *Sequence 9*, 1953 and 1954 versions; *Sequence 12 / Doors*, 1957; "Ashes Are for Burning," 1958; *Sequence 13 / Return to the Bud*, 1959; and *Sequence 9 / On the Deaths of My Fathers*, 1975  
9<sup>1</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 7<sup>3</sup>/<sub>16</sub>"  
Vintage print, mounted and signed  
(52-115), 4 x 5"
158. *The Three Thirds* (Pike, New York)  
October 29, 1957  
From *Sequence 13 / Return to the Bud*, 1959  
6<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 9<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>"  
Vintage print  
(57-57B), 4 x 5"
159. Steep Hill, Lincoln, England  
November 1975  
8<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 6<sup>1</sup>/<sub>16</sub>"  
Vintage print  
(75-98.7), 35mm
160. *Symbols of Futile Fertility* (Marine Cable Reels, P.G.E. Station, San Francisco)  
February 21, 1947  
From *Second Sequence / Amputations*, 1947 version; and *Third Sequence / Knotholes and Doorknobs*, 1948 versions 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5  
4<sup>11</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 3<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub>"  
Vintage print, mounted  
(47-66), 4 x 5"
161. Boston  
April 20, 1974  
8<sup>5</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 10<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>"  
Vintage print, mounted and signed  
(74-19.2), 3 x 4" Polaroid negative
162. Copper Creek, Oregon (Wallowa Mountains)  
Summer 1941  
From the "Wallowa Mountains Series," 1941  
8<sup>15</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 6<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>"  
Vintage print, mounted and signed  
(41-3A or B), two 3<sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 4<sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub>"
163. Old San Juan Cemetery, Puerto Rico  
January 1973  
From "Navigation Markers Group," 1973; and "Neptune Portfolio," 1975  
11<sup>9</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 9"  
Vintage print, signed  
(73-5), 4 x 5"



164. *Burning Bush* (Vicinity of Stinson Beach, California)  
October 13, 1946  
From *Second Sequence / Amputations*, 1947 and 1948  
versions; *Sequence 13 / Return to the Bud*, 1959; and  
*Amputations / Last Will and Minor Testament*, 1974  
3<sup>11</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 4<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub>"  
Vintage print, mounted  
(46-67), 4 x 5"

165. *Sun in Rock* (San Mateo County, California)  
October 12, 1947  
From *Song Without Words*, 1948 versions 1, 2, and 3,  
1949, 1961, and 1965 versions; *These Images*, 1950  
versions 1 and 2; and "Ashes Are for Burning," 1958  
3<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 4<sup>11</sup>/<sub>16</sub>"  
Vintage print, mounted and initialed  
(47-168), 4 x 5"

166. Noyo, California  
January 23, 1948  
From *Mendocino*, 1948; "Ashes Are for Burning," 1958;  
*Sequence 13 / Return to the Bud*, 1959; and *Amputations*  
*/ Last Will and Minor Testament*, 1974  
7<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 9<sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub>"  
Vintage print, mounted and signed  
(48-60), 4 x 5"  
Lent by Peter C. Bunnell

167. Lake Tenaya, California  
September 1960  
10<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 13<sup>1</sup>/<sub>16</sub>"  
Later print  
(60-275), 4 x 5"

168. *Easter Sunday* (Stony Brook State Park, New York,  
Don Erceg Assignment)  
April 14, 1963  
13 x 5"  
Vintage print  
(63-9A), 4 x 5"

169. *Night Icicle* (Window, 72 N. Union Street, Rochester)  
January 17, 1959  
From *Sequence 14 / Sound of One Hand*, 1960 versions  
1, 2, and 3, and 1965 version  
12<sup>7</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 9<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>"  
Later print  
(59-1A or B), two 4 x 5"

170. Mendocino, California (Water Towers, Masonic Lodge)  
January 24, 1948  
5<sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 7<sup>9</sup>/<sub>16</sub>"

Later print  
(48-73), 4 x 5"

171. Bristol, Vermont  
Mid-August 1968  
From *Sequence 1968*  
6<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 8"  
Vintage print, mounted  
(68-10), 4 x 5"

172. *Essence of Boat* (Lanesville, Massachusetts)  
January 10, 1967  
7<sup>15</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 5<sup>15</sup>/<sub>16</sub>"  
Vintage print  
(67-8), 4 x 5"

173. Bristol, Vermont  
November 1971  
11<sup>9</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 8<sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub>"  
Vintage print, signed  
(71-32B), 4 x 5"

174. Serbian Church Graveyard, Jackson, California  
November 13, 1948  
9<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 5<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>"  
Vintage print, mounted  
(48-501P), 4 x 5"

175. Grand Teton National Park, Wyoming  
September 13, 1959  
From *Sequence 15A*, October 1959 version 1, and  
November 1959 versions 1, 2, and 3  
7<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 9<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>"  
Vintage print, mounted and signed  
(59-207), 4 x 5"

## COLOR PHOTOGRAPHS

1. Pavilion, New York  
1957  
6<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> x 8<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>"  
Posthumous dye-transfer print  
4 x 5" Anscochrome

2. Capitol Reef, Utah (Castle Rock Trail)  
July 8, 1961  
6<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 10<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>"  
Posthumous dye-transfer print  
35mm Ektachrome

3. Location Unknown  
Ca. 1964-66  
From "Portfolio Chromatikos," 1975  
6<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> x 10<sup>1</sup>/<sub>16</sub>"  
Posthumous dye-transfer print  
35mm

4. Rome, Italy  
January 1974  
6<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 10<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>"  
Posthumous dye-transfer print  
35mm Ektachrome

5. Boston  
1971  
10<sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 6<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub>"  
Posthumous dye-transfer print  
35mm Ektachrome

6. San Francisco  
Late July 1964  
10<sup>5</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 6<sup>13</sup>/<sub>16</sub>"  
Posthumous dye-transfer print  
35mm Ektachrome

7. Vicinity of Santa Fe, New Mexico  
Mid-July 1966  
10<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 6<sup>11</sup>/<sub>16</sub>"  
Posthumous dye-transfer print  
35mm Ektachrome

8. Capitol Reef, Utah  
September 5-12, 1964  
6<sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 10<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>"  
Posthumous dye-transfer print  
35mm Ektachrome

9. Peru  
Late August or early September 1973  
6<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 10<sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub>"  
Posthumous dye-transfer print  
35mm

10. Oregon  
August 1962  
From "Portfolio Chromatikos," 1975  
6<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 10<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub>"  
Posthumous dye-transfer print  
35mm

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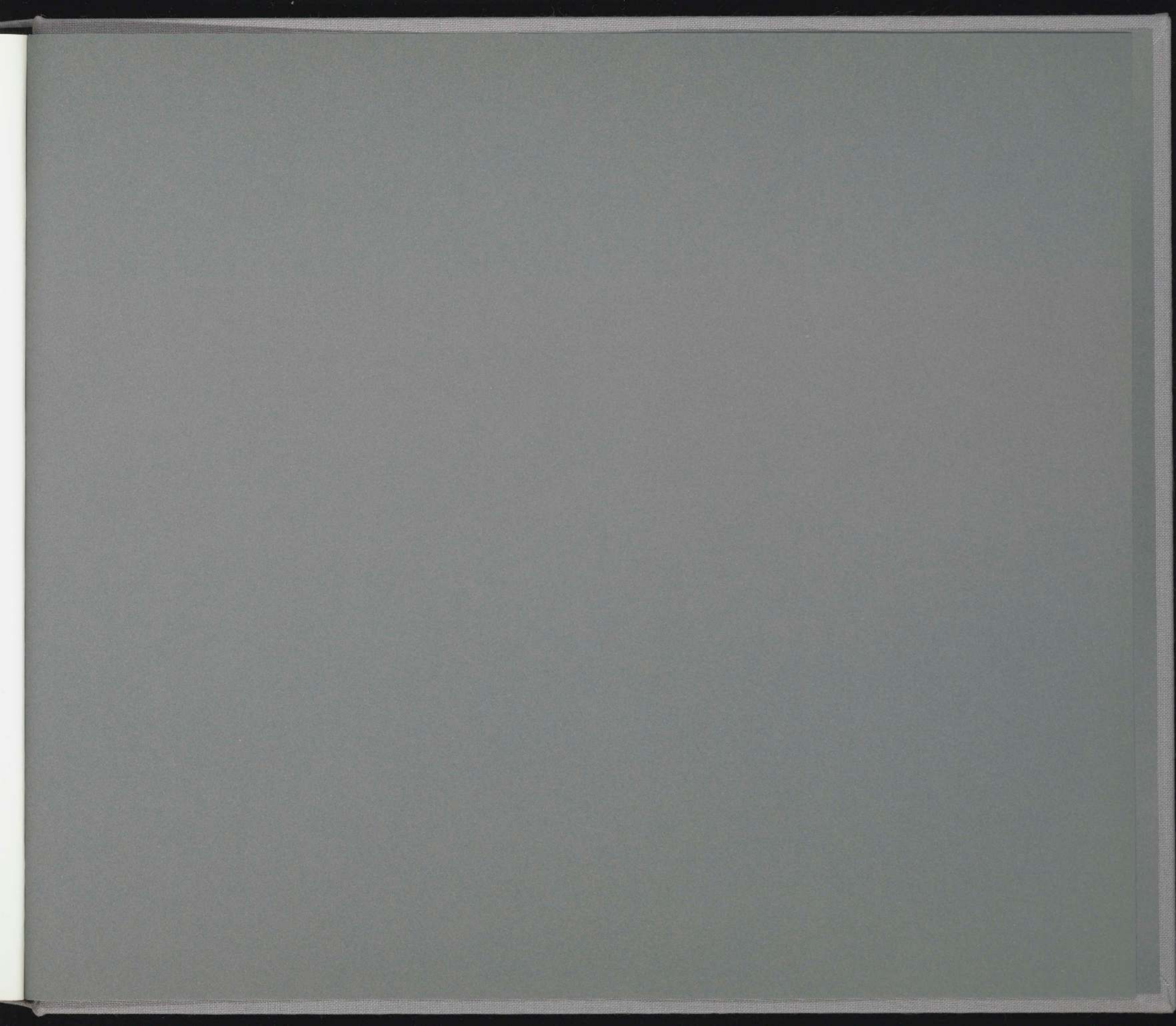
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Inquiries about the work of Minor White should be addressed to:  
Minor White Archive, The Art Museum, Princeton University, Princeton, New Jersey 08544-1018.













(Continued from front flap)

1991. Peter C. Bunnell of Princeton University is the curator of the exhibition and the author of this book, which is the first publication of Minor White's work using the artist's extensive personal archive bequeathed to Princeton University by the artist on his death in 1976. It is illustrated with 295 reproductions of White's work dating between 1937 and 1976. Only one-quarter of the works have been published previously.

314 pages; 10 color illustrations, 285 duotone

Peter C. Bunnell is the David Hunter McAlpin Professor of the History of Photography and Modern Art at Princeton University and faculty curator of photography at The Art Museum, Princeton. A graduate of the Rochester Institute of Technology (where he first studied with Minor White), he holds graduate degrees from Ohio University and Yale University. Prior to coming to Princeton in 1972, he was curator of photography at the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

The author of numerous works on historical and contemporary photographers, Bunnell has written reviews and commentary for *Afterimage*, *Aperture*, *Art in America*, *Camera*, *Creative Camera*, *The New Republic*, *Print Collector's Newsletter*, and *Untitled*, among other publications. His most recent books are anthologies of writings entitled *A Photographic Vision: Pictorial Photography 1889-1923* and *Edward Weston on Photography*. He was the co-editor of two major reprint series, *The Literature of Photography* and *The Sources of Modern Photography*.

He has taught at New York University, Dartmouth College, and Yale University and has lectured extensively in this country and abroad. The former national chairman of the Society for Photographic Education, he is presently chairman of the Board of Trustees of The Friends of Photography.

*Jacket illustrations:* left, Tom Murphy, 1948 (pl. 125); right, Cypress Grove Trail, Point Lobos, California, 1951 (pl. 126)

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